

# God With Us 1 — Its In The Name

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## Introduction (Connection):

Merry Christmas! Welcome to our season of celebrating the advent of Jesus!

Turn to Matthew 1.

## Tension:

This whole Advent season we're going to be focusing on one Hebrew word that makes up three English words that I believe is literally the most excellent, most needed, most valuable, most meaningful, most personal present we could ever receive...

...that is God With Us, Immanuel ... the very presence of God.

This advent we're going to celebrate, study and seek to enjoy the presence of God which is how I believe God wants us to wrap up this year's theme of trying to get the best view of the glory of God.

We started this year with a series called A Glimpse of Glory where we walked through Exodus 34 and Moses' experience of God's glory being *the beautiful perfections of his sovereign character*.

Then we moved to the loftiest place we can this side of heaven to see the glory of God displayed in the person of Jesus Christ in a series called Mountain View as we walked through the Gospel of John, which we will return to at some point in 2020.

For advent, we're going to explore the glory of God that can be seen and enjoyed through the very presence of God With Us.

God has been stirring up this series in my mind and heart for a few years now, and I'm excited to be able to walk us into this.

## Exposition:

Let's read...

**Matthew 1:18-25 — “The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way: After his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together that she was pregnant from the Holy Spirit.<sup>19</sup> So her husband Joseph, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her publicly, decided to divorce her secretly.<sup>20</sup> But after he had considered these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, don’t be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.<sup>21</sup> She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”<sup>22</sup> Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:<sup>23</sup> “See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name him Immanuel,” which is translated “God is with us.”<sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke up, he did as the Lord’s angel had commanded him. He married her<sup>25</sup> but did not have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son. And he named him Jesus.”<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> [Christian Standard Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), Mt 1:18–25.

[Pray]

Today all we're going to do is take a deep look into the one Hebrew word, Immanuel, which means God with us.

Maybe you noticed how the author Matthew states that the virgin Mary's miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit was something God prophesied beforehand by a prophet.

If your bible doesn't contain cross-references in any way, be sure to write down Isaiah 7:14 in your bible because that's where Matthew is quoting from.

More than 700 years before Jesus was born, the Northern 11 tribes of Israel made a pact with the king of Syria and waged war against the southern tribe of Judah, whose king was Ahaz of the lineage of David.

Ahaz expresses disbelief in God, instead tries to make a pact with the king of Assyria, and so God says, "You exhaust me; I'll give you a sign. The virgin will conceive and bear a son and you will call his name Immanuel. He will be born into the poverty of his people, heir to a meaningless throne in a conquered land of Judah."<sup>2</sup>

And that is exactly what we have 700 years later.

The virgin Mary miraculously conceiving a baby boy, born into the Roman-occupied land of Judah that had no Jewish king in ruling authority, born in the lowliest place, a barn out back with a feeding trough for a bed.

This is the context in which Immanuel, God With Us determined to come and be with us.

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<sup>2</sup> J. A. Motyer, The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 87.

Let's dive even deeper into that name because we can't even begin to exhaust the fountain that is found in this invaluable name.

If there is ever a name that we ought to be most thankful for when it comes to the names of Christ, like Prince of Peace or wonderful counselor, Immanuel ought to be at the top of our list.

The Prince of Preachers Charles Spurgeon says this of the name, "Immanuel, God with us.' It is hell's terror. Satan trembles at the sound of it. ... Let him come to you suddenly, and do you but whisper that word, 'God with us,' back he falls, confounded and confused. ... 'God with us' is the laborer's strength. How could he preach the gospel, how could he bend his knees in prayer, how could the missionary go into foreign lands, how could the martyr stand at the stake, how could the confessor own his Master, how could men labor if that one word were taken away?... 'God with us' is eternity's sonnet, heaven's hallelujah, the shout of the glorified, the song of the redeemed, the chorus of the angels, the everlasting oratorio of the great orchestra of the sky..."<sup>3</sup>

Why? Let's break it down into its three parts: God... With... Us.

First...

## GOD

This baby was to bear the name "Immanuel."

Remember what a name means? It references the character, mission, and ability of a person.

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<sup>3</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, The Treasury of the Old Testament (London, n.d.), III:430.

The very character, the mission, and the ability of this young baby would be "God with Us."

This is God, The *Elohim* of *elohim*, This is God, who is spirit, sovereign, triune, transcendent, infinite, eternal, immutable, self-existent, self-sufficient, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent and full of mercy, love, and truth.

The God whose ruling scepter stretches the expanse of unmeasured space, who holds all things contained in that space together and declares over everything, "All things are mine without exception."

This angelic messenger was explaining to Joseph that this child would be unique, unlike any other child born on earth.

He would be a man but would be Yahweh as well.

In other words, this baby, who they were to name Jesus, is the Pre-existent king born of a virgin birth.

The Infinite becomes infant.

The Transcendent becomes immanent.

The Maker becomes man.

The Uncreated becomes created.

So what does this mean about Jesus? Jesus is God.

In conversations with people who are skeptical about Christianity or our unique belief of a trinitarian monotheism, one of their arguments is always that the bible never actually says Jesus is God, or Jesus himself never claimed to be God.

Maybe you're here today and that's you.

Bro, we're only 23 verses into the whole New Testament and it is already shouting that Jesus is God.

In John 1:1 we see that Jesus was the Word who was in the beginning with God and was God.

In John 5:18, like we just talked about a few weeks ago, those who hated Jesus said they wanted to kill him because Jesus was declaring himself to be God.

In Acts 20:28, Paul says that God purchased his bride, the church, with His own blood, which only makes sense if Jesus is God, the creator.

Jesus forgave people's sins, which wouldn't make any sense unless he was God.

If Gary goes up to Bill and socks him in the nose, then I go to Gary and say, "I forgive you," they'd look at me and say, "you moron."

You can only forgive sin that is against you; therefore Jesus must have been affirming all sin was against Him, because he is God.

Jesus is the fullness of God's deity dwelling bodily.  
Let's move on to the next part.

## GOD WITH

This great, almighty, incomprehensible God has put himself into a form of "witness."

No, I didn't make that up, it is a real word defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as this...

Witness — the state or fact of being close to or connected with someone or something: close association or proximity.<sup>4</sup>

God, the one whom there is none like, no god besides Yahweh, the one who dwells in unapproachable light, whom none has seen or can see, is making himself available to be with, to be closely connected to him, to spend time with, to enjoy, to be near, to be close.

A few months back I went on a trip to North Carolina and then Texas that kept me away from my wife and kids for 10 days, the longest I'd ever been away from my wife since before we started dating.

I missed my wife so much, and the only way I could put into words what I was longing for was I wanted to be *with* her... to be near her again, to be close, to hug her and kiss her, to talk with her face to face.

God is making himself available for witness in sending Jesus Christ.

Can I lovingly tell you something: we don't know how to do this anymore, do we?

We don't know how to be present with people anymore.

Don't believe me? This Thanksgiving, how many of you had family in town?

How much of your time was spent sitting around the TV?

That was my Thanksgiving and Christmas almost every year growing up.

My brothers and my cousins would gather around a TV most of the day and watch all the Indiana Jones or James Bond movies, whichever was on...

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<sup>4</sup> *Merriam-Webster*, s.v. "Witness," accessed December 6, 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/witness>

we'd hardly talk to each other, even at the dinner table because we were ripping through grandma's sweet potato and mac'n chess casseroles.

Could I say I was with my family? Sure.

But was I really *with* them in a relational way? Only rarely.

I was present, but I wasn't present.

Have you ever had dinner with someone or went out to get coffee where they took their phone out of their pocket, they silenced it, and then they put it on the table?

Witness has been replaced with an imitation form of witness that says I can be in someone's presence and that still counts as being with someone.

Jesus is establishing exactly what witness looks like: to humble oneself, to be seeking others' good before my own, to sacrifice for what is best for those you long to be with.

Jesus is the availability of witness with God... God with...

And praise God for this third word...

## GOD WITH US

Not God with all meaning he is for all and with all people; clearly God stands against the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Not God with them, as if it is some specific group of the religious elite.

It is God with Us.

Deity with humanity.

Creator with created.

Maker with mankind.  
God with us.

This name symbolized the fact that God would demonstrate His presence with His people.<sup>5</sup>

With us... really?... Us?

*Us who are so prone to losing our way.*

*Us who too often lead lives that are contradictory to what we profess to believe.*

*Us who are susceptible to temptation.*

*Us who find as attractive and alluring the very things that God declares as wrong.*

*Us who still have fickle, unbelieving, doubting, sinful, treasonous hearts.<sup>6</sup>*

God is with *US*?

Our sinfulness prevents us from dwelling on God's holy hill according to Psalm 15.

The coming of a holy God to be with impure rebels doesn't mean life, it means death.

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<sup>5</sup> Paraphrased from Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, "Immanuel," *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1020.

<sup>6</sup> Italicized section adapted from Paul David Tripp, *New Morning Mercies; A Daily Gospel Devotional* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), December 6.

I mean, up until Jesus, it was an absolutely terrifying thing to get into the presence of God.

If your sin wasn't perfectly atoned for as God commanded in His law, being with God could mean death for you and me.

It says in Exodus 28 that high priests would wear bells on their vests as they entered into the holy place of God's presence so that, just in case they died because of God's holiness, those outside the tent would hear the bells stop ringing and they'd say, "Welp, he's dead. Who's next?"<sup>7</sup>

God with us is terrifying news unless our sin is perfectly atoned for.

Did you notice that the angel's message to Joseph was different from the prophecy Matthew quotes from Isaiah?

What's the difference? The name.

The prophecy says his name is to be *Immanuel*, but do they actually name him that? No.

What do they name him? *Jesus*, which means what? "Yahweh saves."

God with us is only good news for sinners if God comes to atone for sin.

That is another part of the character, mission, and ability of Jesus: he saves God's people from their sins so that God can be with us.

"This son would bring salvation from Israel to the nations. He would grow up to be the Suffering Servant who would give his life as a ransom for many (20:28); he would shed his blood to ratify a new covenant, thus securing

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<sup>7</sup> Exodus 28:35

forgiveness for his people (26:28); and he would gather disciples from every nation on the earth (28:19), uniting them in his church (16:18) so he could dwell with us forever (28:20)."<sup>8</sup>

God saves us for the purpose of God with us.

We are now offered the full presence of God, without limitation, without hindrance, without additional sacrifice for sin... we can now freely enter in.

Do you know how jealous Moses and Abraham and David would be of us today?

"Wait, no more sacrifice? No fear of death and judgment? You can just walk right in? No bells?"

Yes, in fact, God has walked right into you and me with the present of His presence through His Spirit.

We can now enjoy God with Us.

But let us not forget the cost. Let us not forget the price paid for Immanuel.

He who is Immanuel, Jesus, to save us from our sin, must offer the life of a pure, spotless lamb... his own body.

Jesus, knowingly, willingly, joyfully, offered his life in our place, not for the best things in us, but for the very worst things in us.

You know those things you keep locked down deep and hide from everyone out of shame? Immanuel died for that!

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<sup>8</sup> David Schrock, "The Bad and Good News of Immanuel" (The Gospel Coalition, December 24, 2015) available online at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-bad-and-good-news-of-immanuel/> [accessed online December 4, 2019].

The Divine became despised.

The Christ was crucified.

The Author of all creation cursed upon the tree that He Himself spoke into being.

And the Lord of Life was laid in the tomb, but the grave could not contain Him.

And so Jesus, Yahweh saves, was raised to life to conquer hell, sin and the grave.

Why?

So we can be with God! So God can be with us!

So we can be restored back to what we were made for!

## **Application/Challenge:**

Do you still feel the weight of this gospel? Or is it getting to be old news to your calloused heart?

I mean, can't you see just how far God has gone to be with you?

The story of history started off with Us being with Him, the story ends with us being with him, and all the middle is detailing the lengths to which God went to in order to get us back with Him.

Can't you see just how far he's gone?

So let me land this whole thing this way, short and sweet.

If this is how far God has gone to be with you, can I ask you...

How far are you going to be with him?

I'm not talking about a works-based relationship to earn your way into heaven.

I'm talking about simply taking time to sit in His presence, to enjoy Immanuel through His Spirit and Scripture.

How far are you going to be with him?

Do you even set an alarm to get up earlier enough before your day starts to sit and be with him?

Have you been captured by the snooze button? Here's a strategy: move your alarm to the other side of the room.

Your wife may hate you for it, but she'll enjoy the godliness you get later on as you get up to be with God.

Are you always checking your phone while you're with him? Turn it off, leave it in the other room, don't use it for your bible.

Don't think that listening to or watching a sermon counts as this either; it doesn't.

Turn off the screens, unless you do that thing where you turn on the four-hour-long youtube video of a fire in a fireplace just to feel warm and cozy by the fire... I'll allow that.

## **Conclusion (Cast Vision):**

Just be with God, because he's gone through the cross, sin, and the grave so he can be with you... the best present is Immanuel, God with us.