

## ***Immanuel – God With Us 10-19-03***

Matthew 1:22-25

Matthew 1:22-25 (NIV) <sup>22</sup>All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: <sup>23</sup>"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"--which means, "God with us."<sup>24</sup>When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. <sup>25</sup>But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

This is the first of Matthew's 16 prophetic proofs fulfilled in Jesus. He has already given us several in the genealogy, but this is the first formal one in which he (or the angel, depending on where the angelic quotation ends) says this took place to fulfill the word through the prophet Isaiah. He is referring to a sign that God said He would give the king of Judah, Ahaz. <sup>14</sup>Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. Isaiah 7:14 (NIV)

Let's consider what was happening at that time in the nation of Judah. Ahaz was one of the wicked kings. Israel, the northern ten tribes, had attacked Judah and killed 120,000 in one day. In addition, they carried away captive 200,000 men, women and children as slaves. Syria had attacked and defeated one of Judah's fortified cities and taken the captives to Damascus. In the midst of this very low point in Judah's history, Ahaz is wondering if Judah is finished along with the royal line of David. Had the promises of God failed?

The prophet Isaiah (or the angel) was trying to tell him that God was not done with Judah, and His promise to David was still in effect. Ahaz will not listen, so Isaiah told him to ask for a sign to verify it. Ahaz refused to ask for a sign. He gave some pious remark about not tempting God. Isaiah told him that God was going to give him a sign anyway. The virgin will give birth to a son, and before he can tell right from wrong those two kings that were enemies of Judah will be gone. This child would be referred to as Immanuel. It sounded utterly impossible. How could weakened Judah survive these powerful enemies? Yet it did, by the Divine direction of God.

God was speaking to something greater than the survival of Judah. He was speaking of keeping His promises. He was addressing His ability to keep His word in ways that are above and beyond what we can imagine. Ahaz is worried about his power and the physical holdings and positions of men. The kings of Israel and Syria went into exile by the time it would have taken for a child to develop to knowing right from wrong, but God is addressing man's need for the intervention of God and the ultimate fulfillment of all His promises.

Thousands of years before Isaiah, God had promised that the Deceiver's head would be crushed by the seed of the woman. <sup>15</sup>And I will put enmity between you and the

*woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.*" Genesis 3:15 (NIV) It was the first promise of a Savior. What did that mean, the offspring of the woman? How can a child be only the offspring of the woman? God elaborated through Isaiah, "A virgin shall conceive and give birth to a son." That means the bloodline is from God. A child's blood type is determined by his father. Since the Law declares the life of the flesh to be in the blood, the promise of a virgin conceiving a child brings into the world someone free from the curse upon Adam and his offspring.

Bible critics, desperate to disprove the miraculous, claim this word for virgin does not mean virgin, but young lady. If God miraculously visited man through the virgin birth, then we are all accountable to hear and obey what our Creator came to tell us. Since this is not something they are willing to consider, they search for a reason to discount it. In doing so they site Proverbs 30:19 as their example that the word used does not necessarily mean virgin. "...*the way of a man with a maid.*" Not only is the translation there questionable, but also their interpretation. Many versions have translated it "*the way of a warrior in his youth.*" Even if the translation is correct, it may mean the wooing of virgin, not the relationship of a married couple.

The very word, *almah* means to be hidden or covered. Mary had not been uncovered by a man. The Holy Spirit could not have chosen a better word to describe her. When Gabriel told her she would be with child, her response was, "*How can this be since I have not known a man?*" Luke 1:34 In the Isaiah prophecy, *Ha-almah* is best translated 'the virgin'. God had chosen Mary to be the mother of Jesus, the virgin that would conceive, the woman whose seed (offspring) would crush the head of the Deceiver.

If the translation were, as critics claim, merely "young woman", what kind of a sign would it be? Young women become pregnant everyday. Are they all signs? No, the sign is when a virgin conceives. Now that would get my attention and make me a believer in the word of the Lord. It should have convinced the Jews of Jesus' day. It should convince us today. The alternative is that Mary was not faithful, and everything we read about her says otherwise. If she was not the woman, the virgin, then who? We might doubt the prophecies were genuine except for the fact that Matthew is going to show us 15 more, the odds of which are astronomical, beyond what statisticians would say is, for all practical purposes, even possible.

As we saw last week, this Savior had to come from the line of David. Did you know that in our day you couldn't find a single person who can show Davidic lineage? Either Immanuel has come by the virgin woman and is with us today, or Christianity and true Judaism are completely erroneous. But if, God was born, the seed of woman, the work of the Holy Spirit in a young virgin, then God has visited man to offer the hope of salvation. That drastically changes everything. If Jesus Christ was the one man without sin, who came to live among us, all God and all man, then we are in desperate need of hearing and obeying His message.

God has always been Immanuel. He was with Adam and Eve in the Garden, walking and talking with them. Enoch walked with God. Noah was shut into the ark and guided to safety by God, who was with him. He was with Moses in the burning bush, the pillar of cloud and fire, the tent of meeting. He said to Joshua, *"No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you."* Joshua 1:5 (NIV) He was with Gideon when he faced overwhelming odds, and with David the man after His heart who wrote, *"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, Thou art with me."* He was with the kings that sought Him and the prophets who yielded to His Spirit. He was with John the Baptist from inside the womb of his Mother. But the day that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, He became God with us in a physical sense.

If God was ever with us in a way we could comprehend Him the best, it was in Jesus Christ in whom dwells all the fullness of Deity in a body. (Colossians 2:9) He was the only One who could say, *"I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me."* John 6:38 (NIV) He was incarnated to show us the will of His Father. Dare anyone expect a more perfect example among mankind than the life of Jesus Christ? No prophet or priest or spiritual person has even come close. His words changed humanity forever. His sacrifice was the most utterly unselfish act the world has ever seen. The skeptics can frame their arguments with clever cunning, but the facts of the life of Jesus remain a proof that His mother was indeed a virgin.

**Commented [notes1]:** <sup>9</sup>For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, Colossians 2:9 (NIV)

Now if you can concede this miraculous beginning, the rest is completely inline with that reality. If God manifested Himself in the flesh among us, of course He can heal the paralyzed, make blind eyes see, and raise the dead. Of course the grave could not hold the Author of Life. No wonder the virgin birth is so attacked! If you concede this one point that Immanuel – God is with us, and I better get my act together. But if I resist this truth, I can argue against anything He said that I don't like. Then I can call him a good man, or an ascended master, a great prophet, but never the eternal Son of God. This is the crux of faith. Was God physically manifested among man as all God and all man in a bodily form? I say most emphatically, "Yes!" His life, death, and resurrection verified it.

I have an interesting idea about the water to wine miracle of John 2. I think the idea was planted in my mind by a commentator but I cannot recall which one. When Mary asked Jesus to handle the lack of wine at the wedding ceremony, Jesus responded that His time had not yet come. Can we read behind this conversation that Mary was asking Jesus to clear her reputation by doing something Divine that would vindicate her story of the miraculous conception? Jesus response would then be taken as, "I'll get around to that in the Father's time." How else do you explain the fact that He went ahead and did the miracle that she requested? The vindication of the virgin birth, the clearing of Mary's good name, was the resurrection. Only the Giver of Life can raise Himself from the dead. As the Giver of Life, He was not conceived like ordinary men.

As I mentioned earlier, He has always been Immanuel through history. He was uniquely Immanuel in the incarnation. He is Immanuel by His Spirit in all believers from Pentecost to the present. He is also Immanuel in your life, past, present and future.

He was Immanuel before you knew Him. No one comes to Jesus without Him drawing them. Jesus said, *"But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself."* John 12:32 (NIV) He draws us because we would never have come to Him on our own. He is Immanuel today with your lost friends. You may think they will never come to Jesus, but remember, Jesus' death on the cross is drawing them. That incredible display of unselfish love is pulling them. They aren't hopeless. He is Immanuel in their lives today. Expect it. Pray that they yield to Him today. They are no different from you or me before we came to Christ. We sometimes think we had an inclination to be good, to find the truth. If we did, it was Immanuel, God with us.

Today He is Immanuel. Jesus said, *"If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."* John 14:23 (NIV) I love this promise. The Father and the Son make their home in us via the Holy Spirit. You may have come from a home that wasn't at peace, but this home is a place of peace that goes beyond all circumstances. There, in your spirit, He makes Himself at home, IF you will obey His teaching. He'll be with you even if you don't, but if you want Him at home within you, it needs to be a peaceful home of harmony, and that means obedience to His loving direction.

He will indwell anyone who would come to Him in faith and receive Him as Lord. Chaplain Ray shared with us that one of the ways to minister to the hurting was to bring the presence of Christ into their situation. That is Immanuel, God with us. When we understand that the Sovereign God of Creation sees our situation and hears our aching heart, everything is different. We are not alone. He is there with us in the midst of our loneliness, our concerns, and our disappointments. His presence helps us to know that He will see us through. Of all the world's faiths, only Christianity announces a God who embraced our pain with us. Immanuel uses the Hebrew expression for God, El. That is the strong God to Whom nothing is impossible. That gives us peace to know that if something needs to be changed, He can change it.

If you haven't been experiencing Immanuel, you may need to find where you are being disobedient, repent, and begin conforming to His will. The lines of loving communication will be open again. You will sense Immanuel there guiding you again. He desires to be Immanuel with you today, but He requires your cooperative obedience.

He will be Immanuel with you in the future, from now to eternity. He promised to never leave or forsake us. (Hebrews 13:5) *And in heaven, <sup>22</sup>I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. <sup>23</sup>The city*

**Commented [notes2]:** <sup>5</sup>Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."  
Hebrews 13:5 (NIV)

*does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.* Revelation 21:22-23 (NIV) We will behold His glory and be transformed by it. He's Immanuel in our past, present, and future!

Let's go back to our text. <sup>22</sup>*All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:* <sup>23</sup>*"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"--which means, "God with us."* Matthew 1:22-23 (NIV) I hope you are starting to appreciate that name even more as you realize all that it means to us.

<sup>24</sup>*When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.* Matthew 1:24 (NIV) When Joseph woke from his dream He took Mary as his wife. God had chosen the right man. He just needed clarity that it was God's will. That is often the case with us. We are ready to serve, it is just that some of the things God asks are kind of extreme. If you are in doubt, wait, and God can make it clear to you. Once Joseph knew, he obeyed without hesitation. We should do the same with direction from Immanuel.

<sup>25</sup>*But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.* Matthew 1:25 (NIV) Many contend (and with some support from the early church fathers) that the brothers and sisters of Jesus were from Joseph's first marriage and that the word "until" does not always imply that they had normal marital relations after Jesus was born. (1 Samuel 15:35) It can legitimately be argued either way. I think the expressions in the Gospels tend to lean toward the children being Jesus' actual brothers and sisters. They were not at His bar mitzvah so they must have been younger. The Jewish perception is that the more children a woman has the more blessed she is, and marital relations were the husbands duty toward the wife. The important thing is not whether or not she remained a virgin, but that she was a virgin when Jesus was conceived.

**Commented [notes3]:** <sup>35</sup>Until the day Samuel died, he did not go to see Saul again, though Samuel mourned for him. And the LORD was grieved that he had made Saul king over Israel.  
1 Samuel 15:35 (NIV)  
There are several uses of 'until' that do not that imply 'afterwards it was so'. Also see 2 Samuel 6:23 and Matthew 12:20

That makes this world a very different place. We live in a world in which God has come to show us His love. It is a horrible offense to reject that love that has been displayed toward us. What is your relationship with Immanuel? Do you keep Him at a distance, or does He walk and talk with you? Oh what an amazing God, who would become one of us and share our pain to draw us from darkness to light. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century St. Athanasius wrote, "He became what we are that He might make us what He is." I would add that He is with us moment by moment for that same purpose. Let Him be Immanuel- God with you – today and everyday.