

Emmanuel - God With Us

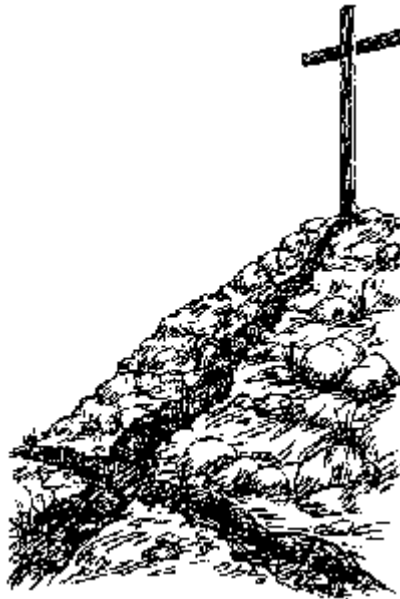
Matthew 1:20-23

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(Matthew 1:20-25 KJV) "But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. {21} And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. {22} Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, {23} Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. {24} Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: {25} And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS."

Introduction

Last week I mentioned that there are sixty-three "fear not" messages in the Scripture - and last week we looked at the one of these "fear not" messages. If you will recall, the shepherds were tending their flocks by night when the Angel of God appeared to them. His message was:

(Luke 2:10 KJV) "... Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."

God said "Don't fear, for this message is Great - in fact, it's better than great. It is what you have been waiting for

all along - so don't fear!" Even though God appears in your midst, little shepherds, don't fear. For God comes not to smite, but to bless.

The "fear not" message that we are going to study today is a little different than the one we studied last week. Last week God told the shepherds to "fear not" in His presence - this week God tells Joseph, a faithful and believing saint - to "fear not" God's handiwork. You see, for years Israel looked for Messiah to come and save her from her enemies. Israel expected God our Christ to appear suddenly in the sky, and to avenge her enemies, destroying all that oppressed her. This will happen one day, but it was necessary that the *spiritual* be satisfied before the *physical* be taken care of.

As humans we always want to get the cart before the horse, so to speak. We want to have God take care of the *physical* first, then we will be concerned with the *spiritual*. But God's order is reversed. You see, the *spiritual* is the most important. Jesus told the woman at the well:

(John 4:21-24 KJV) "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. {22} Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. {23} But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. {24} God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth."

Here is another sermon in itself - but "fear not!", I'll not preach this one today. I do want to emphasize this, though. Salvation *is* of the Jews, for salvation *comes only through Jesus Christ* who was born of the line of Jesse, of the Tribe of **Judah**, of the line of David the King. Israel for years tried to worship God *physically* by using ritual and sacrifice and the Law - but she always fell short. Why is that? Because the *physical* cannot save. A building cannot save, a ritual cannot save, a thing cannot save. Only God can save. The Law condemned us and showed us how far we are from God's standard. We are all sinners - and we had to have a Savior, But how to be saved?

Hence God's entrance into humanity. The Great God, who is a Spirit - as Jesus said;

John 4:24 ... God is a Spirit

But *we are physical*. God, who is a Spirit - not of flesh and bones as we are - must be worshiped *spiritually* and *truthfully*. How then shall we who are human reach *the infinity that is God*?

God entered into humanity. God came among us. God cloaked Himself in flesh so we could see Him. God came of a Virgin, and His name is Jesus!

1. God Is In The Moment

(Matthew 1:20-21 KJV) "But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of

David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. {21} And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."

Joseph had discovered some disturbing news. The woman that he was engaged to be married to was carrying another person's child. This was not a simple matter in these days. The Law (**Leviticus 20:10**) specifically ordered that *both adulterer and adulteress be put to death with stones*. The shame that this would bring on Joseph was terrible if word got out, but the loss of someone he loved so dearly - Blessed Mary - would be more than he could bear.

Joseph was torn between two desires. He had the desire to honor God and God's Law - for Joseph was a God fearing man - but he also had the desire to protect Mary from the shame of stoning. He couldn't imagine that beautiful bride of his laying torn and beaten outside city. Those guilty of stoning offenses were usually left outside the city where they died, left to the carrion feeders, a mute warning to all others who would mock God's Law. What to do - WHAT to DO!

The *King James* says that Joseph "**thought on**" these things, the *New American Standard* that "**when he had considered this**". The English language can barely express the truth of what was in Joseph's heart. There are many times when we are in agony of soul such as Joseph was in. We *ponder* over how we will overcome the situation, we agonize over different options. There are

times when we cannot even voice our suffering. We cry out with David:

(Psalms 6:6 KJV) "I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears."

Joseph was at the end of resources, but God is in the moment. God is always in the moment, when we surrender ourselves to Him. God was in the moment when Adam fell in the Garden, but our forefather was busy trying to cover up his sin. God was in the moment when Israel stood on the brink of the Jordan and looked over into the Promised Land - and choked, refusing to cross. Oh had they but realized God was in the moment! God was in the moment when the priest Zacharias prayed pitifully, for he had no heir to his name. God was in the moment when He came to Zacharias and said:

(Luke 1:13 KJV) "... fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John."

Zacharias' wife Elizabeth would have one of the greatest children ever to be born, John the Baptist, because God was in the moment. Mary would have the greatest Child, Jesus, because God would lower Himself to dwell with man.

In our modern era we would relegate God to a servant status. Man would have us to believe that we serve a weak God, a God who has no ability nor any power. Man would believe that God is at his beck and call, and that God has nothing to do with man outside of that which we

would allow. We have heard so much of this *evolutionary nonsense* that we ourselves believe that we have evolved to where we are Creator and He is created.

How foolish!

God is in the moment yesterday, today, and forever. God is in control, not us - not Satan - not all the hosts of Heaven - but God is in control! Time is a bubble that we live in, but God lives outside of. The Bible says:

(Galatians 4:4-5 KJV) "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, {5} To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

Jesus came *in the fullness of time*. Jesus came *right when God wanted Him to come!* Joseph saw an out of control thing, and felt caught between a rock and a hard place. God saw that the time was right - it was **the fullness of time** - and it was time for Jesus to come forth into humanity. It was time for God to *enter the bubble of time* as a baby, sinless, the Lamb of God for God's people.

Jesus Christ had to be born a Jew in the flesh, for salvation is of the Jews. Jesus had to come to pay the penalty of sin as a Jew, for the Jews have the Law, and the Law is our Schoolmaster. The Law our Schoolmaster showed us how *exceedingly sinful* we are. The Law took all our ideas of goodness, or morality, of sweetness, of human value, of humanism, and wadded these ideas up as garbage. The Law said "You cannot enter My

Heaven!", but the Baby said "You may enter by My Blood".

God is in the moment - and God help us if we do not seek God while we are able!

2. God Is In Control

Matthew 1:20b - 21 "... for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. {21} And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."

God proved that He was in the moment, for He even ordered the name of the Baby that was to come. Man may not name God! When God created all things, He brought each living creature to man to *see what he would name it*:

(Genesis 2:19-20 KJV) "And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought *them* unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that *was* the name thereof. {20} And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field .."

God allowed man to name all the creatures that He made, for these creatures *were under man's control*. Man was to have dominion over creation, to control creation, to enjoy the bounty of God - a bounty that we neither earned nor deserved.

But Jesus was *not to be named by man*. Jesus was no mortal child, no mere baby subject to the naming of his parents. His parents were His caretakers while He grew into human manhood, but they were not His master. God has no master, but God is Master of all. Joseph had no hand in creating Jesus, for JESUS is GOD in the flesh. As The Lord said:

Matthew 1:20b “... for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost ...”

Joseph would have other children by Mary after Jesus was born, but that Baby in the Manger had no earthly father. To show us the Father, Jesus would have only God as His Father. To show us eternity, Jesus would be born of woman, and would have to lay down His life for us.

No man gave Jesus His life, and no man took Jesus' life. Jesus said:

(John 10:15-18 KJV) "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. {16} And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. {17} Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. {18} No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."

The Jews said of Jesus, “He hath a devil” (**John 10:20**), but Jesus had no devil. Jesus was MADE of God in the flesh, BORN of the virgin Mary, but IN ESSENCE has always been and will always be Eternal God.

Matthew 1:21b “... thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.”

Joseph was given the *right* to name Jesus, as the legal guardian of the Messiah, but was given no choice in what he *would name* Him. His name was to be JESUS.

Why Jesus? Why this name above other names? Because *names meant much* to the Jews. Jesus came first to save Israel, and God named this Baby “Jesus” as a signpost for all who would heed Him. “Jesus” is the Greek Iesous {pronounced ee-ay-sooce’}, and its Hebrew equivalent is Yehowshuwa’ {pronounced yeh-ho-shoo’-ah}. Both names - though pronounced differently - mean “God our Savior”. This explains why the sentence that follows Jesus' name says:

for he shall save his people from their sins

What power there is in this statement! How shall I get to Heaven? Shall I work my way there by the Law? No, for the *very name of Jesus* declares that He alone is to be my Savior. Shall the unbeliever or the evolutionist or the atheist enter those glorious streets of gold? No, for the very Name of Christ says that HE shall save HIS PEOPLE from their sins. What about my sins? Are there sins that I have committed that render me unfit for Heaven's gate? Again, JESUS means that GOD is OUR SAVIOR, and there is no sin too terrible that the Cross will not cover.

A man is a fool if he hopes to journey to Heaven without JESUS.

When I was younger, I and my family were vacationing in the “Peak District” of England. This is a mountainous area with ample - but steep - footpaths. As we wanted to walk these paths, but were afraid that our children would fall off of the steep mountainsides, I found a rope and tied it around my waist, around my children's waist, and finally around my wife's waist. Then we began to climb the trails. As we got higher and higher first one child, then another would fall - but I walked in the lead and prevented their fall. As I weighed many times their weight it was no bother for me to anchor them to the trail, even with my wife at the end of the line - and we safely climbed to the top of that mountain.

So it is with Christ JESUS. If Jesus is your Savior then you are anchored to Someone who cannot be moved. He is eternal God in the flesh, come down from Heaven to die for our sins. As the Scripture says:

he shall save his people from their sins

Are you one of the people of God? Then you are saved by believing on Him. If you are relying on your own abilities, your own goodness, your own righteousness to get to Heaven, then you might as well climb a mountain with a spider's web as your anchor! If God is your Savior, then you are His Sheep, His People - and your sins are covered by the Blood of the Lamb. We shall be saved not us from damnation, but

from their sins

from any sin that binds. God has, as Spurgeon said,

Wash[ed] your people in the fountain filled with Blood and they are clean. Now wash us from defilement in the water. Lord Jesus, now take from us everything that would hinder the closest communion with God. Any wish or desire that would hamper us in prayer, please remove it, Lord. Any memory or sorrow or care that might hinder the fixing of our affection wholly on our God, take it away now.” (Help From on High)

We need not hang our head in shame at past failures or blemishes with the world, but need only focus once more on God our Savior. Jesus is the Christian's eye chart, and the Spirit of God our glasses. If you are not seeing the whole picture through God's eyes - then its time to go back to the Great Physician. If you expect greatness as a person, as a people, as a Church outside of the anchor of our souls Jesus Christ, then it is time to head back to the Bible for a dose of reality.

God is in control of the situation - and God is also in control of the salvation.

3. God Is With Us

Matthew 1:22-23 “Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, {23} Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.”

God now directs our attention back *to our own smallness when compared to Him*. Oh, we do not like to think of ourselves as small. But when we, like Israel, come face to face with God on Mount Sinai, and see the rumblings and the fire of God in the mountain,

(Exodus 20:18-19 KJV) "And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw *it*, they removed, and stood afar off. {19} And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die."

When we see God as He is in His might, we feel mighty small. We say, You go speak to Him, for we fear Him, lest we die". God is love (**1 John 4:8, 16**), and we are proud to think of Him as love, but one day man will see the same God and cry out to the mountains, as the Book of Revelation prophecies:

(Revelation 6:15-17 KJV) "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; {16} And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: {17} For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

Oh Beloved, there is coming a day when the door of the

Ark will be shut, and the doors pitched. The wicked will be judged, and the careless and slovenly and foolish will beg for the mountains to fall on them and hide them.

God keeps His Word, and keeps His appointments.

The birth of Jesus was the fulfillment of a prophecy that was made through Isaiah:

(Isaiah 7:14 KJV) "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

The prophecy that God made through Isaiah occurred in 734 BC, a long time before Jesus was ever born to Mary. When Israel heard this prophecy of Messiah, she looked expectantly every day, thinking that He might come that day. A hundred years passed, then two hundred, then three hundred, then four hundred. Israel waited and, once she fell under Roman rule, perhaps she despaired of ever seeing the Savior.

But God's timing is not our timing. What God promised, He will do - but He will do it in His own time. Isaiah prophesied of the Christ Child, but God is not dictated to by the passing of time nor by the wants of man. Christ came *in the fullness of time*.

But what of the name "Immanuel"? Messiah was named JESUS, God our Savior, but why was He called "Immanuel". Jesus was called many names, all descriptive of His function within the Godhead. Jesus is God, but He is God with Us. He is God Whom we can touch, God with Whom we can relate. In the Old

Testament Temple God could only be approached by the High Priest as he entered into the holiest of holies. While the first Temple and the Law of Moses stood God could not be *with* or *among* us. As the Bible says:

(Hebrews 9:8 KJV) "The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:"

David cried "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me", (), for God came and went from among man. The relationship was temporary, uncertain, and God could depart as easily as He came. But JESUS our Immanuel changed all that. We no longer have God separated from us by the veils and ritual of the Law, but

(Hebrews 10:19-25 KJV) "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, {20} By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; {21} And *having* an high priest over the house of God; {22} Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. {23} Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;) {24} And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: {25} Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

The assembly of the Saints is not a chore, but a privilege. Many yawn through the services of the Church, but God is with us today. He is with us to save us. He is with us to befriend us. He is with us to guide us. He is with us forever.

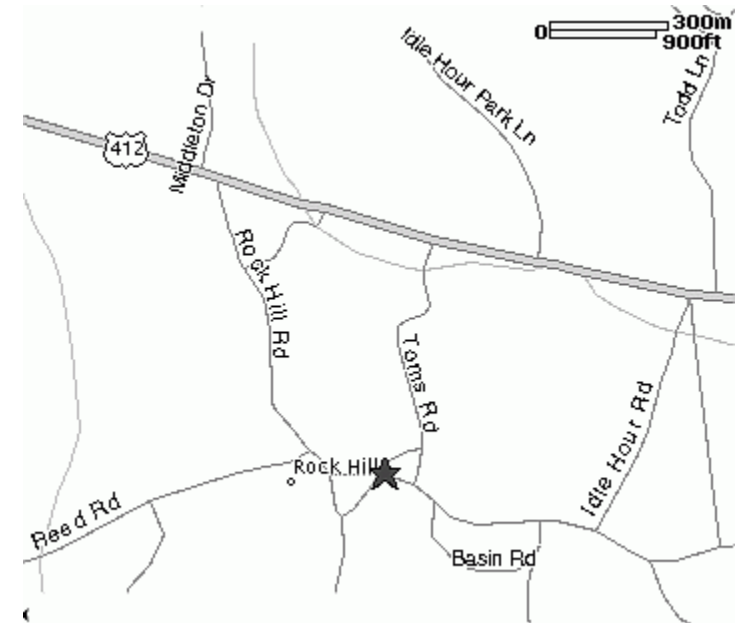
We need to remember in this holiday season that God IS WITH US. Emmanuel. Jesus. That Baby in the Manger was more than just a Baby - He was and is and will always be God our Savior - With us.

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