

A PRESENT SAVIOR

INTRODUCTION

Two weeks ago I preached on the power of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. He exercises His power and authority in order to conquer our stubborn, sinful hearts. He conquers us not for the sake of oppression, but in order to free us from sin and death and the fear of judgment.

Last week I preached on the purpose for which Jesus took on human flesh: to save His people from their sins. God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

Jesus could have exercised His power and authority at a distance. He could have even redeemed us at a distance. In a sense, He DOES exercise His power and redeem us from a distance. There is a distance of time between His work and today; it's been 2,000 years. There is a distance of space between Himself and us today; He is in heaven, we are on earth.

But there is a third aspect of His incarnation that reduces the distance. It's not 2,000 years since He redeemed us; He is redeeming us in this very moment. We are not separated from Him as the distance from heaven to earth; He is with us as we trust and obey Him.

We see the distance eliminated in the name given to Him in [Matthew 1:23](#), as he quotes [Isaiah 7:14](#):

and they shall call His name Immanuel, which means “God-With-Us.”

Matthew 1:23 *ESV*

“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).

Let's just work through the words as Matthew wrote them.

AND THEY

"They" are not Mary and Joseph. The angel Gabriel commanded them to name the child Jesus ([Matthew 1:21](#); [Luke 1:31](#)). They did name Him Jesus at His circumcision ([Luke 2:21](#)). He was known as Jesus as He grew up and throughout His ministry. Even after His resurrection He is called Jesus well over three hundred times in the rest of the New Testament.

So, who are "they"?

Those who have come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Those whose faith is in Him, and whose lives belong to Him. The testimony of Christians since the birth of the church has been the same. Jesus Christ is God-With-Us. In the hardest moments of life Jesus is been God-With-Us. We are too weak to stand on our own, but Jesus is God-With-Us. We feel inadequate to the tasks before us, but the Lord is God-With-Us. We often feel as Paul did:

2 Corinthians 2:15–16 ESV

For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?

Our answer is the same as Paul's:

2 Corinthians 3:5 ESV

Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God,

Life in Christ and ministry for Christ is usually beyond our own abilities; if it weren't, it wouldn't be ministry, but just good works. But Jesus is God-With-Us, our Immanuel, our sufficiency.

SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL

Names aren't just helpful; they're necessary. They help us identify individuals.

Do you remember Laurence Eagleburger? He was a career diplomat. He was ambassador to Yugoslavia, deputy secretary of state, and secretary of state under Bush, Sr. Laurence had three sons, and in an attempt to confuse the Social Security Administration, named all three sons Laurence Eagleburger. The sons are distinguished by their middle names: Scott, Andrew, and Jason. All children need names, whether plain ones like Bob, or odd ones like Moon Unit Zappa, whose brother is Dweezil Zappa.

The Bible uses names in a different way, to describe someone's work, nature, or character. "Adam" means man. "Eve" means living. "Satan" means enemy. "Devil" means accuser or slanderer.

- Jesus means Yahweh saves.
- Christ means Anointed One.
- He is the Son of God and the Son of Man.
- He is the Bread of Life.
- He is the Good Shepherd
- He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.
- He is Lord.
- He is King.
- He is High Priest.
- He is the Word.
- He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.
- He is Prince of Peace.
- He is Firstborn.
- He is the Holy One of God.
- He is the Only Begotten of the Father.

- He is Son of David.
- He is the Author of Our Salvation.
- He is the Lamb of God.
- He is God-With-Us.

It's interesting that Jesus is never actually spoken of as Immanuel. It is not a given name; it's a description.

WHICH MEANS

Matthew interprets Immanuel for us; it means God-With-Us. Let's think about this for a moment. Matthew's Gospel is generally thought to be meant for Jews. There are 165 Old Testament quotations, citations, and allusions.

So, why would Matthew interpret a Hebrew word in a book written for Hebrew-speaking people? It's true the Old Testament uses Immanuel just twice, both times in Isaiah. It's not a common title. But it's a simple cognate word. The first part is the word "im," or with. The second part is the word "el," meaning God. Immanuel. God-With-Us.

Why bother to interpret it for the reader?

I think that it must be because Jesus did come to save Jews only. [John 3:16](#) says

John 3:16 ESV

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

[First John 2:2](#) says,

1 John 2:2 ESV

He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Matthew, moved by the Holy Spirit, knew his Gospel was not just for Jews. Gentiles would read it too. The more common names and terms they would pick

up from the Old Testament Scriptures. But they would need help to understand "Immanuel." Matthew doesn't leave us in the dark; he tells us what it means.

That's because the Spirit of God, breathing the Gospel through Matthew, wants us to understand the Word. We see this in [Acts 8](#), when the Holy Spirit sent Philip down a desert road from Jerusalem to Gaza.

Acts 8:27–28 ESV

And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah.

Acts 8:29–31 ESV

And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and join this chariot." So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

The Father wants us to understand, and sent the Son to teach us. The Son wants us to understand, and sent the Spirit to open our eyes. The Spirit wants us to understand, and His primary ministry is teaching us.

And so Matthew, writing the God-breathed Gospel, gives us the interpretation of Immanuel. He knew that Jews wouldn't need it, but that Gentiles would. No one should remain ignorant of who Jesus Christ is, regardless of their language. This truth – Jesus Christ is God-With-Us – should not be kept from anyone. God wants us to understand.

GOD-WITH-US

Immanuel means God-With-Us. Not "God is with us." Not "God is on our side." Not "God is always around somewhere." Not "God is always watching." God-With-Us.

- Jesus is God-With-Us. ([Matthew 1:23](#)).
- He is "the Word made flesh" ([John 1:14](#)).

- He is God “manifested in the flesh” ([First Timothy 3:16](#)).
- Jesus says, “Whoever has seen ME has seen the FATHER.” ([John 14:9](#)).
- Jesus came to reveal the Father to us ([John 1:18](#)).

Think about what Jesus did during His ministry.

He taught the Word of God, and His teaching astonished people. Unlike the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus' teaching had authority. When He taught, He expected a positive response of faith and obedience, and rebuked those who refused to believe. He didn't drop hints. He didn't urge people to find their own truth. He who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life showed the way, spoke the truth, and lived the life. God-With-Us taught us the Word of God.

His miracles astonished people. At times His miracles frightened people. His disciples were frightened when He stopped the storm. They were afraid when they saw Him walk on water. The woman healed of a twelve-year disability was afraid. When Jesus healed the paralyzed man, the people were beside themselves with amazement. When He raised the widow's son, fear seized all the people. People flocked to Jesus hoping for deliverance from disease, disability, and demons. They knew that Jesus possessed power and authority over every aspect of creation. God-With-Us walked among them.

Oh, but there is so much more than teaching and miracles. There is salvation. Freedom from sin and shame. New life, new birth, a new Spirit, a new heart. Adoption by the Father, and the joy that comes with it.

Jesus forgave **the paralyzed man** before He healed him. The healing was only temporary; the man would die someday of something. But the forgiveness was eternal.

A prostitute who had been forgiven came into a Pharisee's house where Jesus was eating a meal. She knelt, wet Jesus' feet with her tears, dried them with her hair, kissed them, and anointed them with precious ointment. She did not do this to earn forgiveness; she did this in the joy and freedom of having been forgiven. Jesus Christ, God-With-Us, came to bring salvation.

Following His resurrection, Jesus ascended to heaven; He is absent in body, but present in Spirit. He is physically in heaven, interceding for us, always. He is spiritually with all of His people, always. He is God-With-Us. As we live and wait for our glorification from heaven, He remains God-With-Us.

Luke writes about the first martyr, Stephen, being brutally stoned to death:

Acts 7:55–56 ESV

But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”

The apostle Paul, standing before Nero himself, found himself without human support, and later wrote Timothy:

2 Timothy 4:16–17 ESV

At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion’s mouth.

The Scriptures are full of God being God-With-Us.

- The Lord was with Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah in the Babylonian furnace.
- He was with the apostle James as the sword descended.
- He was with Polycarp as the flames rose around him.
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BRINGING IT HOME

Years ago I had the privilege of performing a funeral for a man who had only just come to Christ. His wife and daughter were believers, but he had resisted. At the end of his life, his body riddled with cancer, his daughter shared the Gospel with him one more time, and he believed in the Lord! He died just days later, and as he took his final breath, his daughter asked him, “Dad, do you see Jesus?” His face lit up in a smile, and that smile remained as his soul stepped through the door to see his Savior face to face. Jesus was with him in that moment. He didn’t step through to the other side by himself.

The God who walked with His people through the wilderness doesn't leave us alone to find our way in the dark. He is God-With-Us, so that we may be Us-With-God.

Countless Christians have recognized that Jesus Christ is God-With-Us. They have known His peace and His strength as they face suffering and persecution. Our bodies age and decline. Our natural abilities fade away. But the Lord Jesus, God-With-Us, strengthens us with faith and courage. He sustains us with hope. He is Immanuel. He is God-With-Us.

You know, some people might think that Jesus came so that it would be Christmas every day. That sounds good, unless what they mean is the modern definition of Christmas. Everyone is happy, everyone is having a good time, everyone is getting along. There is no biblical definition of Christian, only the incarnation. The incarnation took place so that people who live in the darkness of sin and judgment would see the light of mercy and forgiveness. Jesus didn't come so that we could have Christmas every day; He came so that we could have Easter every day. Victory over sin and death, hope for eternity regardless of our current experience, and the knowledge that even while our Savior is away from us in heaven, He is also with us now. He has not abandoned us like orphans. He is God-With-Us.

Who is Jesus to you? I hope you don't think of Him as the "Christ Child" or something like that. He was a baby, yes, but He didn't come to be a little baby that would make all of us ooh and aah. Jesus came to be the Savior who would cause us to know our sins, hate them, turn away from them, and believe in His saving work on the cross and the promise of the Gospel.

I know people who have a deep respect for Jesus, and hold Him in high reverence. But they would never say that He is with them, except in the most vague, humanistic way. He's off doing something important, and doesn't have time for people. But that falls short of biblical faith and confidence. Jesus is God-With-Us. He proves it constantly, even though we don't realize it most of the time.

If you know Jesus, then you have been strengthened by Him. You may not have known it at the time. You may have been so immersed in grief or pain or suffering that you didn't realize that you were not alone. But Jesus, God-With-Us, was there with you. I'm like you. I'm glad that Jesus walks with us through

this life. And I wish that He would walk us AROUND the hard places in the road. But I praise His name that He never leaves us, but walks with us THROUGH those hard places, never leaving us, never forsaking us. He is truly God-With-Us. Praise His holy name!