

The Theology of Christmas:

God is with Us

Matthew 1:18-23

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Text Introduction: (Right after video) That's a great question isn't it? How would your life change if you were absolutely convinced that God Himself was with you?

In these weeks leading up to Christmas we have been studying the subject of the "Theology of Christmas." We have examined the sovereignty of God, the humanity of Jesus, and the deity of Jesus. Today, I want you to think with me about a simple, yet profound truth of Christmas—God with us. This was the message of the prophet Isaiah. Indeed when Jesus came, God was with the people of that day. Today, He is still with us through the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit.

This simple message of Jesus' coming was also introduced by the gospel account of Matthew.

Text: ¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. ²⁰ But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ²¹ And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."

²² So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ²³ "*Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,*" which is translated, "God with us."

Introduction: Consider the words of Captain Gerald Coffee, POW for 7 years and 9 days during the Vietnam War.

"Christmas 1968 stands out in my memory. I had never known what real loneliness could be. And then I thought about the simplicity of Christ's birth. Here there was nothing to distract me from the awesomeness of Christmas. No commercialism. No presents. Little food. I was beginning to appreciate my own spirituality because I had been stripped of everything by which I had measured my identity...rank, uniform, money, family. Yet I continued to find strength within. And I realized that although I was hurting and lonely and scared, this might be the most significant Christmas of my life.

Only knowing God as Immanuel makes this possible!

The verse in Matthew 1:23 is an actual quotation from Isaiah 7:14. Isaiah speaks this prophecy to King Ahaz in a very difficult time for Judah. Let me take a moment to walk you through that background. After the reign of Solomon, that great king of Israel, Israel was divided into two separate kingdoms—Israel in the North and Judah in the South. Israel turned from God and was overtaken first. It is in the Southern kingdom that Isaiah speaks and where Ahaz is king. Ahaz had reinstated worship of a pagan

god. Because of his disobedience and wickedness, surrounding kings were threatening to take over that territory. Instead of depending upon the one true living God, Ahaz turns to the help of the Assyrian king, Tiglath-Pileser. Ahaz had plundered the Temple and given the gold and silver to buy Tiglath-Pileser's allegiance. God sent Isaiah to Ahaz for a talk. Ahaz refused to listen. It is at this point that Isaiah prophesies about the virgin born child Immanuel. God's plan will not be thwarted. It has always been God's desire to not leave us or forsake us—to be with us.

Immanuel means God with us, which means...

God's Presence is Always with us.

- Deuteronomy 31:6 ~ "...for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you."
Context of verse: These are actually the words from Moses as he passes the mantle of leadership to Joshua. These are similar words that God gave to Moses.
- John 14:16,18 ~ "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever. I will not leave you as orphans."
Context: Jesus to disciples before His Death.
- Matthew 28:20 ~ "...and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
Context: Jesus to disciples before Ascension.

The knowledge of God's presence is both a promise and a warning. Warning because we must acknowledge that God sees what we do, hears what we say, and knows what we think.

God's Power is Available for us.

- Acts 1:8 ~ "but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you..."
- 2 Peter 1:3 ~ "seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness..."
- Ephesians 1:18-19 ~ "I pray that ...you will know...what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe."

Amazing, isn't it, that the same power that raised Christ Jesus from the grave is made available to us?

God is for us.

- Romans 8:31~ "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

We need to make sure that we have a God-centered theology and not a self-centered theology. That is, we are not saying that life is about us and fulfilling our wants and wishes. What we are saying is that God receives His greatest glory by acting on our behalf to reconcile us to Him.

So What? Isaiah 7:1-16, especially v. 4 (Points Taken from NASB translation)

- Take Care
- Be Calm

- Have no Fear
- Do not be faint-hearted

Nancy Sisley shared something with me last week. I asked and received her permission to share it with you. Nancy's husband, Dale, passed away a week ago Friday (the service was yesterday). When Nancy walked in and found her husband of 54 years non-responsive she said she immediately cried out to the LORD, "How could you let him die alone?" Immediately, Nancy said, she sensed the LORD's reply, "He didn't." Then she cried out to the LORD, "How could you leave me alone?" To which she sensed the LORD reply, "You aren't." That's the message of Christmas.