

Immanuel – Part 1
God with Us – Isaiah 7:14
Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – Dec. 8th, 2024

Intro:

- Christmas is a time of celebration. We gather with family and friends to share gifts and laughter and connection. Christmas should also be a time of wonder and reflection as we think about the greatest gift that has ever been given. Amid the lights, music, and joy, there lies a deep and life-changing truth that forms the foundation of our celebration: the name Immanuel, which means “God with us,” not God above us, or around us, or beyond us, but *with us*.
- This promise of an Immanuel was fulfilled in Jesus, and in Jesus, we see and know, we touch and feel, we hear and understand the very person and heart of God. In these next moments together, we will explore this profound truth, looking at the promise of Immanuel, its fulfillment in Jesus, and its implications for us today.

The promise of Immanuel

- From the beginning, God’s desire has been to dwell with His people. We see this in the Garden of Eden, where God walked with Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:8). Later, He made His presence known and dwelt among His people through a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire in the wilderness (Ex. 13:21-22), in the tabernacle (Ex. 33:7-11), and later in the temple (2 Chron. 7:1-3). God sent prophets and even angels to communicate to His people that He indeed hears and is with them (Joshua 1:9, 2 Sam. 7:9, Jer. 15:20). Yet these messengers were only a shadow and taste of the ultimate fulfillment to come.
- God spoke to the prophet Isaiah, instructing him to tell His people that He will give a sign of His coming: **“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14).**
- These words were first spoken to King Ahaz of Judah to reassure him of God’s sovereignty and deliverance from their enemies. But this was not just a sign for him and him alone in his circumstance; its ultimate fulfillment of a virgin giving birth was to be a sign for all the nations - that they would be delivered from their ultimate enemy, which is sin and death.
- Isaiah continues to talk about these things and their ultimate fulfillment by saying, **“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. 3 You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder” (Isa. 9:2–3).**
- The nation of Israel received this prophecy, and they were delivered from their immediate enemies. They and all nations anticipated and awaited the ultimate fulfillment of this promise—to be delivered from our real enemies—when God’s enduring presence would be with His people. Its promise of Immanuel pointed to a future hope, one that transcended their immediate circumstances and brought deliverance to the ultimate enemies of sin and death.

The fulfillment of Immanuel

- Now we fast forward to the Gospel of Matthew, where Isaiah’s prophecy is ultimately fulfilled through the power of the Holy Spirit in a girl named Mary. **“All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘The virgin will conceive and give**

birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' (which means 'God with us')"
(Matt. 1:22-23).

- Later, when Jesus began His ministry, Matthew recorded that the words of Isaiah were fulfilled in Jesus, that **"The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned"** (Matt. 4:16).
- In Jesus, God did not merely send a messenger or a representative; He came Himself. The eternal Word became flesh and dwelled among us (John 1:14). The Creator entered His creation as one of us. Jesus, who was with God in the beginning and through whom all things were made (John 1:1-3), took on human form. He chose to experience hunger and fatigue, pain and temptation, ridicule and rejection, scorn and shame. He knew the taste of His own tears yet all the while demonstrated the will and word of the Father as the spotless lamb who came to take away the sin of the world.
- The Holy One walked among sinners. Despite our rebellion and sin, God's response was not to remain distant but to come near. Jesus' life reflected the heart of a God who seeks and saves the lost (Luke 19:10).
- The King of Glory humbled Himself. Born in a manger, Jesus' arrival was marked by humility. He came not as a conquering warrior but as a vulnerable baby, demonstrating that God's power is perfected in weakness (2 Cor. 12:9).
- Jesus' presence on earth was the ultimate expression of God's desire to be with us. His death on the cross and resurrection made it possible for us to be reconciled to God, removing the barrier of sin and its consequence of death that separated us so that we could dwell in the house of the Lord forever (Ps. 23).
- So this is what it means for us, the implications of Immanuel, God with us.

The implications of Immanuel

- The title of Immanuel is not just a historical fact or a theological concept; it is a living reality for us today. God indeed dwelt among us in the flesh, and we know His name. Jesus will again dwell among us when He returns in a resurrected body. And now He dwells within us and among us through the Holy Spirit. God is still with us, guiding and comforting and convicting and teaching and transforming and empowering us. What does this mean for our lives?
- *God's presence brings comfort* - In seasons of fear, loneliness, or grief, we can hold on to the promise that God is with us. Psalm 23:4 reminds us, **"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me."** At Christmas, we remember that God entered into our brokenness to bring hope and healing. You and I are never alone. He walks with us in all seasons of our lives because He is our good shepherd.
- *God's presence brings strength* – Strength to endure all trials and temptations and strength to overcome all obstacles and adversaries. We are told to **"fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart"** (Heb. 12:2-3). And also to **"be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power"** (Eph. 6:10).
- *God's presence brings purpose* – We were **"created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do"** (Eph. 2:10), with the chief purpose among them being to **"go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the**

name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20).

- Even now, God is with us, in us, and among us, as we wait for the final day when the Father says to Jesus, “Go get your bride; the wedding’s today!”

Conclusion

- This Christmas, let the name Immanuel fill your heart with awe and gratitude. God’s desire to be with us cost Him everything, yet He gave willingly so that we might know Him. As we celebrate, let us remember that the story of Christmas is not just about a baby in a manger but about the God who came to dwell with us and remains with us today and will be with us eternally.
- Let us respond to this incredible truth by drawing near to Him in worship, trusting Him in every circumstance, and sharing His love with a world in need. Immanuel—God with us—changes everything.
- Closing Prayer

Benediction

May the truth of Immanuel—God with us—fill your hearts with wonder and joy. May His presence bring you comfort in every trial, strength for every challenge, and purpose in every step. Go in peace, with the assurance that God is with you now and always. Amen.

Questions for Growth Groups

1. How does the promise of "God with us" in the Old Testament (e.g., Isaiah 7:14) deepen your understanding of God’s desire to be close to His people? How does this encourage you in your current circumstances?
2. The sermon mentioned several ways God made His presence known throughout history (e.g., the tabernacle, the temple, Jesus’ life). Which of these stands out to you the most, and why?
3. In what ways do you personally experience God’s presence in your life? How does the Holy Spirit affirm that God is with us in your daily walk?
4. What does it mean to you that Jesus came not just as a representative of God but as God Himself, taking on human form? How does this shape your relationship with Him?
5. How has God’s presence brought you comfort, strength, or purpose in a specific situation? Share a time when you experienced one of these in a meaningful way.
6. The sermon encourages us to respond to the truth of Immanuel by drawing near to God, trusting Him, and sharing His love. Which of these responses is most challenging for you, and what steps can you take to grow in that area?
7. Christmas is a season of sharing good news. How can the truth of “God with us” inspire you to share Christ’s love and hope with others during this season?