

**IMMANUEL
CHRISTMAS AND THE PRESENCE OF GOD
THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF GOD SERIES**

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TEXT: Matthew 1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. 19 And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. 20 But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 “She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” 22 Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 23 “Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which translated means, “God with us.” 24 And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, 25 but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.

INTRO: I want to talk about Immanuel, God with us. I know that Christmas is a time of joy, family and celebration. But we also know that it can be a very lonely time of the year.

It can be a very lonely time of the year, but people are feeling lonelier than ever before. It is not just the seniors.

According to Internet market research firm YouGov, “The social media generation is the one that feels the most alone.” Their latest report details a surge in feelings of loneliness among the millennial generation, currently between the ages of 23 and 38. In their latest poll, 30 percent of millennials reported feeling lonely either always or often, compared to 20 percent of their boomer counterparts.

We are living in what society is calling an “Age of Loneliness.” There are a number of factors for loneliness.

- 1) Cities and communities have changed. Many people have moved because of work, and we are no longer physically close to parents and family members.
- 2) Divorce has skyrocketed, which causes isolation, alienation and separation.

- 3) People have longevity of life, and usually one spouse outlives another. My mother-in-law is 95, and she has been a widow for over seven years. My father was a widower for eight years.
- 4) The proliferation of dating sites is another indicator of people looking for relationship and companionship. As the famous words from the Beatles, “Look at all the lonely people.”

I was talking to a hair stylist at Neihule Salon. This past year, she lost her twin sister, her boyfriend broke up with her last month, and she is alienated from her parents. She asked me what I was doing for Christmas. I invited her to our Christmas Service on December 22. I could pick up her loneliness.

In the midst of your loneliness, I want to talk about Immanuel, God with us. God is with you. He will never leave you or forsake you. He promised to be with us forever!

We know Jesus has many names, each of which describes His nature and character.

Isaiah 9:6 gives many names for Jesus the Messiah: **Wonderful Counselor, Almighty God, Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.**

In Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah gives another name for the Messiah, that he will be named Immanuel. **Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.**

Matthew quotes Isaiah 7:14 but then gives the meaning of the name Immanuel. **Matthew 1:23 Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which translated means, “God with us.”**

Matthew begins with the truth that God is with us, and he finishes his Gospel with a promise from Jesus, **“I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20)**

Here is an amazing thought: God wants to spend eternity with you. Even I get tired of being around me sometimes! But not God.

The greatest present God gave us during Christmastime is His Presence!

PURPOSE STATEMENT: I want to share with you how God is with you and what that looks like.

I. IMMANUEL, GOD WITH US, MEANS THAT HIS MANIFEST PRESENCE IS WITH US

A. GOD IS OMNIPRESENT

1. Psalm 139:7 Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? 8 If I ascend to heaven, You are there. If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. 9 If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, 10 Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me.

2. We know God is Spirit and is Omnipresent, but He has not always revealed Himself through His manifest presence. Even from Malachi to the angelic visitation of the Christmas story is called “the 400 years of silence.” There was no recorded manifest presence during those 400 years.

B. GOD’S MANIFEST PRESENCE IN THE WILDERNESS

1. Why Moses DOES say in Exodus 33:15 “If Your presence does not go *with us*, do not lead us up from here.”

2. Because the presence of God is everything. It brings God’s blessings, His favor. It is manifested in provision, protection, prosperity, His peace. But the main point in Exodus 33 is that God would speak face to face with Moses and give him specific instruction and guidance.

3. Exodus 33:7 Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, a good distance from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the Lord would go out to the tent of meeting which was outside the camp. 8 And it came about, whenever Moses went out to the tent, that all the people would arise and stand, each at the entrance of his tent, and gaze after Moses until he entered the tent. 9 Whenever Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent; and the Lord would speak with Moses. 10 When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would arise and worship, each at the entrance of his tent. 11 Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses returned to the camp, his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.

4. Because God was with the people of Israel, you see the blessing of God with them. He supernaturally delivers them from slavery. They leave Egypt with gold and silver. They cross the Red Sea supernaturally. They had clothes and shoes that did not wear out, and supernatural food — supernatural provision. There was a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

5. In essence they were experiencing heaven on earth, and this was in the Old Covenant!

C. THE GARDEN OF EDEN

1. **Genesis 3:8** They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

1. I want to submit to you that what made the Garden of Eden heaven on earth was God's manifest presence.

2. Adam and Eve never got hungry, never got sick.

3. **3 John 2** Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.

4. The Garden was perfect. God's will is to have heaven on earth. He said, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth." At the center of heaven on earth would be God, who would walk in the midst of them.

D. THE PRESENCE OF GOD WITH DAVID

1. When David was bringing the Ark of the Covenant, *which represents the presence of God*, he had placed the Ark in Obed-Edom's home. He was a Philistine from Gath. There is an interesting verse there.

2. **2 Samuel 6:11** The ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite for three months, and the LORD blessed him and his entire household. ¹² Now King David was told, "The LORD has blessed the household of Obed-Edom and everything he has, because of the ark of God." So, David went down and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing.

3. Heaven had invaded Obed-Edom's home through the Ark.

4. **GOD WANTS TO BRING EXTRAORDINARY BLESSINGS TO YOU IN 2020 THROUGH HIS MANIFEST PRESENCE!**

II. IMMANUEL, GOD WITH US, MEANS THAT GOD BECAME MAN

A. **Matthew 1:18** Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. ²⁰ But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ²¹ "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." ²² Now all this took place to

fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ²³ **“Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which translated means, “God with us.”**

1. **Philippians 2:6** Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. ⁷ Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, ⁸ he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross. (NLT)

2. John 1:1 and 1:14.

3. The fact that God became man reveals ultimately how much God loves you. He came to be man so He could be our substitute and die for our sins, so that everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life.

III. IMMANUEL, GOD WITH US, MEANS THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

A. John 14:16 “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you *forever*; ¹⁷ *that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.*”

1. We see the Trinity in action here. God the Son, Jesus, will ask God the Father to send God the Holy Spirit.

2. The word “Helper” is also translated “Counselor.” The Holy Spirit is our 24/7 counselor. He is always on call. Before you got up this morning and after you go to bed tonight, He will be interceding for you!

3. It is experiencing heaven on earth for all of eternity.

4. Even when Jesus comes back, He will create a new heaven and a new earth.

5. The reason why when you are born again, it is God’s greatest gift because you can experience heaven now, not when you die, but you can have heaven on earth.

6. Jesus promised that God with us, Immanuel, will be in us through the Spirit.

B. RIGHTEOUSNESS, PEACE AND JOY IN THE HOLY SPIRIT –

Romans 14:17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

1. Christmas is a time of celebrating the joy and peace that God gives to us. Luke 2:10 But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; ¹¹ for today in the city of David

there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord... ¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.”

2. Let’s examine how the Holy Spirit gives us righteousness, peace and joy.

C. RIGHTEOUSNESS – When you are born again, you are declared righteous. Not only are your sins forgiven but you have received the gift of righteousness. There is no sin in heaven. His nature of righteousness *supernaturally* comes inside you. You are no longer a slave to sin. Just like Mary conceived Jesus supernaturally, God’s righteousness comes inside you through the Holy Spirit.

D. JOY – Joy is a fruit of the Spirit. It is something supernaturally given when you give your heart to Jesus. **A.W. Tozer** said, “**Most Christians are trying to be happy without a sense of the presence.**” The greatest gift God gives us is the present of presence. God gives us joy through the Holy Spirit. We need to be constantly in the presence of God and be continually filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

E. PEACE – Peace with God. **Romans 5:1** “**Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.**” Inner peace: the peace that passes all comprehension (Philippians 4:7). The fruit of the Spirit includes peace in Galatians 5:22. E.g. Testimony of Mayanin: (Show picture of Mayanin) how she was in a car accident and almost died, but she survived — she knew it was God who saved her. When she gave her life to the Lord, she could not stop crying.

CONCLUSION: This Christmas, God has given us His greatest gift in His Son, Immanuel. I want to give an invitation to know Jesus and experience the presence of God through the Holy Spirit, by giving your heart to Jesus.

I believe that God is going to bless you this Christmas and He is going to give you a breakthrough in the new year!