

EMMANUEL—GOD IS PRESENT

2010 Mark Beard

Text: Matthew 1:22-24 NIV

²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”). ²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

“If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator; If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist; If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist; If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer; But our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Savior.”

-Source Unknown

What significance is there to God being present?

I. GOD’S PRESENCE KEEPS US IN AN UNSAFE WORLD

A. The incarnation reminds us God never abandons His children.

John 14:15-20 “If you love me, keep my commands. **16** And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— **17** the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. **18** I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. **19** Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. **20** On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.

B. The incarnation made abundant life possible.

II. GOD’S PRESENCE COMFORTS US IN OUR TIME OF NEED.

A. The incarnation reminds us gloom and despair has no place in the presence of God.

Isa 9:1 “Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan—² The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.”

B. The incarnation destroyed the power of darkness.

John 1-5 NIV “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was with God in the beginning. **3** Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. **4** In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. **5** The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

III. GOD’S PRESENCE IS THE ULTIMATE VICTORY FOR HUMANITY

A. The incarnation brought us redemption from our sin.

Galatians 4:4-7 NIV “But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, **5** to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. **6** Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “*Abba, Father.*” **7** So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

B. The incarnation brought us the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

John 14:26-28 NIV “But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. **27** Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

28 “You heard me say, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.

1 John 5:3-5 NIV “In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, **4** for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. **5 Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.**

CONCLUSION

Non-Christians seem to think that the Incarnation implies some particular merit or excellence in humanity. But of course it implies just the reverse: a particular demerit and depravity. No creature that deserved Redemption would need to be redeemed. They that are whole need not the physician. Christ died for men precisely because men are not worth dying for; to make them worth it.

-Source Unknown

NOTES:

Matthew was right to recognize in Immanuel (compare Is 8:8) a sign pointing to the ultimate presence of God and triumph for Judah in the Davidic Messiah who would be born to Israel (Is 9:1-7; Blomberg 1992:60; Keener 1993:48). Matthew recognizes that Scripture reveals the divine plan, and those who trust its authority need doubt no miracle it promises.

But Matthew speaks of more than personal repentance; he evokes the Old Testament hope of the salvation of God's people, including the justice and peace of God's kingdom. For Matthew, and for us, salvation from sin cannot end with a prayer. Matthew promises salvation not only from sin's penalty but also from its power. Christ's followers are not merely heirs of his coming kingdom but servants of the King, committed to exemplifying the values of that future world in the midst of this present evil age.

More than anything, Matthew's narrative of the virgin birth, like every other event in Matthew, explains and exalts the character of his Lord. Many Bible readers today want the Bible made "relevant" and "practical" to issues like those Matthew teaches through the example of Joseph, but nothing Matthew tells us is more practical than the way he reveals the heart and character of our Lord. As we get to know Jesus better through the Scriptures, we get to know Scripture's author and our character becomes more like his (see 2 Cor 3:14-18).

In view of Matthew 18:20 and 28:20, Matthew clearly understands *God with us* in Isaiah 7:14 to mean that Jesus is truly God (Mt 1:23). But as God "*with us*," Jesus is also the fully human one who *save[s] his people* by the cross. Matthew thus invites us to consider and worship the God who accepted the ultimate vulnerability, born as an infant to poor and humiliated parents into a world hostile to his presence. Oppressors must hate such a God, for his abandonment of power for love is contrary to everything they stand for. But the broken and oppressed find in him a Savior they can trust in a world where trust is generally dangerous. Of all the world's faiths, only Christianity announces a God who embraced our pain with us.