

EMMANUEL

Christmas will soon be with us, and that thought can fill you with dread; or with excitement! The thought of all the wrappings that are now added on to the real Christmas is enough to make anyone feel a little dejected! The original idea of giving gifts to celebrate is still a wonderful idea, but now this has really gone overboard. The cost involved in the average home is enormous, and an element of competition has crept in – who can give the biggest, the most expensive, and the most attractive gift?

When we recognize the real meaning of Christmas it must fill us with delight; it is so wonderful to realise that God gave the Gift of His Son to a lost world. This is why we celebrate at this time.

I want us to think about the name given to our Saviour, both in prophesy by Isaiah, and as recorded by Matthew in his account of the Angel visiting Joseph – the name ‘Emmanuel’ .

*Isaiah 7:14 The Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him **Immanuel**.*

*Matthew 1:23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name **Emmanuel**, which being interpreted is, **GOD WITH US**.*

There are four thoughts I would like to leave with you for your further meditation, each centred around the glorious truth that Emmanuel has come – **GOD WITH US**; and He is with us not only at Christmas!

As we are nearing the time when we remember the birth of our Lord Jesus, we must start with the fact of **GOD WITH US - IN THE FLESH**.

I. EMMANUEL

GOD WITH US - IN THE FLESH

This truth is fundamental to everything else. It is such an amazing truth that Paul, who had so much revealed to him by the Lord, called it a mystery!

1 Timothy 3:16 most certainly, the mystery of godliness is great: He was manifested in the flesh, [Holman]

I like the way the Contemporary English Version expresses the thought given in John 1:14

The Word became a human being and lived here with us. We saw his true glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father. From him all the kindness and all the truth of God have come down to us. [CEV]

The NIV gives it as

The Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son. [NLT]

How amazing! This is The Word who was in the beginning, the One who spoke the creation into existence, and He became a human being, and made His home with us – the Creator making ‘his home among us’! What a gift! As we prepare to celebrate the ‘babe in the manger’, let us not forget ‘the submitting Sovereign’. Laying aside the glory He had with the Father – the worship of the adoring angelic host – the sublime sinless perfection of heaven - He came and dwelt among us ‘full of grace and truth’.

The Apostle Paul picks up this point and leads further, as he addresses the Philippians’

Philippians 2:8 He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death - even to death on a cross.

This points us on to the reason he was **GOD WITH US - IN THE FLESH**. He came this way to identify with us, and live a spotless life so that He could die for us and become **GOD WITH US - AS REDEEMER**

Oh EMMANUEL, we worship you.

II. EMMANUEL

GOD WITH US - AS REDEEMER

Because we were unable to save ourselves, He came to bring salvation to us, but at what a cost. Good works were marred by our sinful nature, so they would not do. Silver and gold, and all that it represents could not pay the price of our salvation; one soul is of more value than the total wealth of the whole world. Sin had to be dealt with by death! Here we have the death of the perfect substitute in our place. Our salvation was purchased with His blood. Let us not forget that this is a vital part of the true meaning of Christmas! What a gift. See how Peter expresses it,

I Peter 1:18-19 You must know that you were redeemed from the useless way of living inherited by tradition from your forefathers, not with corruptible things such as silver and gold,¹⁹ But you were purchased with the precious blood of Christ (the Messiah), like that of a sacrificial lamb without blemish or spot. [Amp]

Paul also takes this message, making clear the purpose and price of the purchase. The purpose was to 'purchase – the church of God'. The price was 'His own blood'.

Acts 20:28 the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. [NKJV]

This is the best gift anyone can have at Christmas, or at any other time. It is also the best news to share with others at this special season – see what Paul has to say,

II Corinthians 5:19 God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. [NLT]

Can you imagine giving someone an introduction to the Lord Jesus Christ, and them having the Gift of Eternal Life! That would be the best Christmas ever for them.

Oh EMMANUEL, we bow before you.

It really is an astounding fact that He didn't share just a portion of Himself with us when we were born again, but He has given us every thing we need, and more! He has given us Himself; **GOD WITH US - IN ALL FULLNESS**.

III. EMMANUEL

GOD WITH US - IN ALL FULLNESS

Colossians 2:9-10 In Him the entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily,¹⁰ and you have been filled by Him, who is the head over every ruler and authority. [Holman]

What a gift! This is about God actually being with us! Not at the end of a telephone line to a call centre in heaven (sorry the lines are all busy now, please call later). Not being represented by some mighty angelic being (they wouldn't really understand us as they have not lived as we do). Not on some wonderful television screen with a transition from some celestial studios (what if we had a power cut in the middle of an important Divine Discourse?) No! We now have **GOD WITH US - IN ALL FULLNESS**.

The limit to what we receive is governed by how much we draw from Him! He is with us - **IN ALL FULLNESS**.

To help us appreciate this, the Lord did not simply give us a manual, although we do have one in the Bible, but to aid our understanding He came right where we are – just like we are – knowing us through and through, and seeks to reveal God to us! See what John says;

John 1:17-18 The law was given through Moses, but God's unfailing love and faithfulness came through Jesus Christ.¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. But the one and

only Son is himself God and is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us.
[NLT]

Not just a manual but **EMMANUEL!**

A manual can be good and helpful, but it is even better when we have someone to explain it to us, and God has given us the Holy Spirit to guide us into truth!

John 16:13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.
[NIV]

To comprehend what this means is really too much for us to take in, but our lack of full understanding does not prevent us from possessing the reality in our daily lives – not just at Christmas! We enjoy so much in our lives each day without an understanding. We switch on lights and power and have no worry about the source of the supply. I get into my car, without knowing how it really works, and still enjoy a drive. Modern technology has taken this even further – an email from my home can be at the other side of the world in minutes, I don't understand how it happens, but I enjoy using it! If we use such things without understanding, why can we not simply accept, and enjoy what God has provided for us freely, as a gift. With us today, and every day is **GOD WITH US - IN ALL FULLNESS**. How amazing, and how true!

Oh **EMMANUEL**, we exalt you.

To help us appreciate this, the Lord has gone even further than being born on earth in a human form, He now comes to live in those who have experienced the 'New Birth'. We can know in our daily experience **GOD WITH US – ALWAYS**.

IV. EMMANUEL

GOD WITH US - ALWAYS

One day, some years ago, at the close of a service, a lady went out saying 'the Lord wasn't here today'. Was she right? I thought about this and then realised that the Lord had clearly stated that He would be present when two or three met in His name. My next thought was have we met in His name? As I looked around the congregation I could definitely say that we had. So who was right? I came to the conclusion that I would rather believe God's promise, than person's feelings! That has helped me many times since, even when my own feelings have raised a question. God's Word is sure and certain, and does not depend on our feelings, but on God being unchangeable. He has made some wonderful statements to His people about His being with us, such as

II Corinthians 6:16 We are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."
[NIV]

It is a fact that God wants to be with His people. When the Children of Israel came out of Egypt, the Lord showed them how to make a place for Him to meet with them as they journeyed – the Tabernacle. Later He showed them how to build a Temple in which they could meet with Him. Now He has us, the Church, where He delights to meet with His people. What an incredible gift – the gift of His continual presence. Let me remind you of what the writer to the Hebrew Saints says,

Hebrews 13:5-6 God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never abandon you." ⁶ So we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?" [NLT]

Finally the words of the Lord Jesus Himself,

Matthew 28:19 Be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age. [NLT]

What a Gift, the gift of His abiding presence. This must surely cause us to say

Oh **EMMANUEL**, we give ourselves to you.

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