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God Is Still With Us

MATTHEW 1:18-23

Introduction

1. This is a special time of the year.
2. I say this because families tend to get together at Thanksgiving and Christmas more than any other time of the year.
3. But there is also something else which happens at this time of the year.
4. More than any other time or season of the year, a large portion of the world focuses on Christ.
5. It is true that we do not know at what time of the year He was born, but stop for a moment to consider this.
6. The number of carols which address the coming of Christ into the world:
 - a. O Come, O Come, Emmanuel
 - b. Away In A Manger
 - c. O Little Town Of Bethlehem
 - d. Angels We Have Heard On High
 - e. Do You Hear What I Hear
 - f. O Holy Night
 - g. Joy To The World
 - h. It Came Upon A Midnight Clear
 - i. Silent Night
 - j. Hark, The Herald Angels Sing
7. The number of nativity scenes and other symbols we encounter in businesses and even public buildings.
8. The reason I selected this morning's Scripture reading is not to focus upon Christ's birth, but upon who He was — Immanuel, God with us.
9. What is so significant about the fact that God came to dwell among us?
10. Is He still with us today?

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I. God Came To Dwell Among Us

A. HE DID SO THROUGH THE ONE WE KNOW AS JESUS

1. He is responsible for our very existence (John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16-17).

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.” (John 1:1–3, NASB95)

“For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.” (Colossians 1:16–17, NASB95)

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2. Though He was Deity in every way, He did not see it as something He must hold on to.
 - a. Hebrews 1:3 tells us that “He is the radiance of His [God’s] glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.”
 - b. In Philippians 2:6-7, the apostle Paul added that, “although He existed in the form of God, [He] did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped” or held onto.
 - c. Instead, He “emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:7, ESV).
 - 1) Though He had all the rights of deity, He did not hesitate to set all that aside when He became a man.
 - 2) “He surrendered His right to manifest Himself visibly as the God of

all splendor and glory.”¹

3. The apostle John, after telling us about this Word which “was with God,” which “was God” and which “was in the beginning with God” goes on to add in John 1:14 these words, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

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B. HIS LIFE AMONG US WAS ONE OF GREAT PURPOSE

1. He came to reveal God to us (John 1:18).

“No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.” (John 1:18, NASB95)

- a. Through His life and work, Jesus displayed the nature of His invisible Father.
- b. In the upper room on the eve of His crucifixion, after telling His disciples “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” and that “no one comes to the Father but through Me” (John 14:6), He then added, “If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him” (John 14:7).
- c. This prompted Philip to say, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us” (John 14:8).
- d. Jesus responded by saying, “Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Phillip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father . . .” (John 14:9, NASB95).
- e. On one occasion, the apostle Matthew tells us that “Jesus was going

¹ Lightner, Robert P. “Philippians.” In *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, edited by J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985.

through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.” (Matthew 9:35, NASB95)

- f. As Jesus looked at the people He encountered, Matthew said, “He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36).
- g. One translation of this passage (HCSB) says they were “weary and worn out.”
 - ☐ Have you ever felt “weary and worn out?” Not physically so, but mentally, emotionally and spiritually. If so, Jesus came for you.
- h. In Isaiah 42:1-4, God speaks through His prophet, Isaiah, of His Son’s coming and tells us in verse 3 that Jesus “will not break a bruised reed, and He will not put out a smoldering wick” (HCSB).
 - 1) Do you know anyone who is a “bruised reed?” People who are close to breaking?
 - 2) Do you know someone who is “a smoldering wick”? Someone whose fire has just about died out?
 - ☐ He who came to be “God with us” promises to give us strength. He promises to light the fire in our souls again and make us whole.

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- 2. He came to seek and save the lost.
 - a. In the city of Jericho, as Jesus was walking with a tax collector named Zaccheus to his house, Jesus said to the crowd following them, “the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).
 - b. Who are the lost? We are.

- 1) To be lost means we cannot find our way to God.
 - a. In Proverbs 21:2, the wise man Solomon wrote, “Every man’s way is right in his own eyes.”
 - b. Twice in that same book, he cautioned us about that way, “There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25).
- 2) It means to wander aimlessly about.
 - a. How often have we heard someone say, “just follow your heart?”
 - b. In Jeremiah 17:9, God spoke through His prophet and said, “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?”
 - c. When we become bitter, or stubborn or hard in our hearts, we are more likely to choose those paths in life which lead us farther and farther down a path that is not good.
- c. God’s Son came in the form of a man, as “the Shepherd and Guardian of [our] souls” (1 Peter 2:25), in order to show us the way back to God.

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3. He came to give us abundant life — not only in this life, but in the life to come.
 - a. As we have seen in our study of the book of Ecclesiastes, life without God is “meaningless,” we are simply “chasing after the wind” (Ecclesiastes 1:14, NIV84).
 - b. In the apostle Paul’s letter to the Christians in Rome, he makes the case that none of us are righteous (Romans 3:10), but that we have “all sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).
 - c. In Romans 6, he adds that prior to Christ we were “slaves of sin” (Romans 6:17) and that the outcome of that sin is death (Romans 6:21).

- d. However, God gave us a free gift, eternal life, and this life is found in “Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).
- e. On one occasion, Jesus described Himself as “the door of the sheep” (John 10:7) and “the good shepherd” (John 10:11).
- f. He said “the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy” (John 10:10) — this thief represents Satan and his intentions in our lives.
- g. Of Himself, however, Jesus said, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).
- h. As God with us, Jesus not only shows us how to live life in this world to its fullest, He also, as I shared with you just a moment ago, gives us eternal life (John 3:16; 1 John 5:11).

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16, NASB95)

“And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” (1 John 5:11, NASB95)

- 4. He came to defeat the power which death holds over us.
 - a. Hebrews 9:27, tells us that we each have an appointment with death.
 - b. It is the last enemy we will face (1 Corinthians 15:26).
 - c. Jesus came to make sure that it does not have the final say in our lives.
 - d. Paul said there is coming a time when “death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Corinthians 15:54).
 - e. It is God who gives us that victory and He does so through “our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57).
- 5. All of this is why “Immanuel” (God with us) walked upon the face of this

earth among us as Jesus, our Savior.

6. But He has long since ascended back to His Father.
7. He is now seated on His throne in Heaven at His Father's right hand.
 - a. Mark, in the gospel which bears his name, tells us that after Jesus had given the great commission to His disciples, "He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God" (Mark 16:19).
 - b. Hebrews 1:3 lets us know that when Jesus "had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."
8. Didn't Jesus promise to be with us always, even to the end of this present age? (Cf. Matthew 28:20)
9. Hasn't God promised us that He "will never desert" us or "forsake" us (Hebrews 13:5) ?
10. How then is God still with us today?

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II. God Is Still With Us Today. How?

A. THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. In the upper room on the eve of His crucifixion, Jesus told His disciples that He must leave them, but promised that God would give them another Helper in His place (John 14:16).

"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever;" (John 14:16, NASB95)

2. Just before His ascension back to His Father, Jesus reiterated that promise (Acts 1:8).

"but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." (Acts 1:8, NASB95)

3. It was fulfilled ten days later on the day known as Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4).
4. Peter told the crowd which gathered that day in Jerusalem that they were witnessing the fulfillment of God's promise through His prophet Joel to pour out His Spirit on all mankind (Joel 2:28).
5. After being convinced by Peter's preaching that the Jesus who they had recently crucified was none other than "Lord and Christ," they asked him, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).
6. Peter responded, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).
7. No longer was God with them in the sense that Jesus walked among them.
8. Now God was with them by the fact that His presence dwelt within them.
9. In 1 Corinthians 3:16, the apostle Paul asked the Christians in Corinth, "Do you not know that you (plural) are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16, NASB95).

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10. Three chapters later, he made the case for moral purity in their individual lives and again asked, "do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).
11. Those of us who are Christians now have God dwelling in us through His Spirit.

Slide 9**B. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR US?**

1. Through the Holy Spirit, God expresses His love for us (Romans 5:5).

"And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured

out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Romans 5:5, NASB95).

- a. This love which God has for us encourages us in our hope of eternal life.
- b. The Holy Spirit is God’s pledge to us of our inheritance in glory (Ephesians 1:13-14).

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2. God is still with us when we struggle physically, emotionally and spiritually (Romans 8:26-27).

“In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.” (Romans 8:26–27, NASB95)

- a. The verb which Paul uses here (present, middle or passive, indicative) means that the Holy Spirit keeps on helping.
- b. When we don’t know how to pray or what to pray for, the Holy Spirit comes to our rescue and intercedes on our behalf.

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3. God is still with us helping us develop our Lord’s heart within (Galatians 5:22-23).

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22–23, NASB95)

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4. God is still with us, strengthening us from within (Ephesians 3:16)

“that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be

strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,” (Ephesians 3:16, NASB95)

- a. Through this strength, we are able to stand against Satan’s schemes (Ephesians 6:10-11).
- b. He helps us to remain steadfast and patient in our Christian walk (Colossians 1:11).

Conclusion

1. If you are a Christians here today, please know that God is still with you, living within through His Holy Spirit.
2. If God is for you, who can possibly stand against you?
3. Long ago, the apostle Paul wrote a letter to the Christians in Rome.
4. In the middle of that letter, he asked them a series of questions, two of which are these:
 - a. “Who will separate us from the love of Christ?” (Romans 8:35a).
 - b. “Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” (Romans 8:35b).

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5. He then answered with these words:

“But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:37–39, NASB95)

6. Is God with you today? If not, is it because you have not yet submitted your life to Him?