

Immanuel

“She [Mary] will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:

“The virgin will be with child and
will give birth to a son,
and they will call him Immanuel”—
which means, “God with us.” (Matthew 1:21-23)

What glorious news for God’s people then—and now! Jesus, *Jehovah* our Savior, was coming to be physically in our midst. The Word was about to become flesh (John 1:14).

It’s true that God had been with His people in the Old Testament. He walked with Adam and Eve in the garden (Genesis 3:8), and He spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend (Exodus 33:11). God went with Joshua into the promised land (Joshua 1:5), and He was clearly with the good judges and kings. He was even in the fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Daniel 3:22-25)!

David knew the joy of God’s presence in his life, and the grief when he lost it and was out of fellowship with God. Others, like David, experienced grief and disaster in their lives when God chose to no longer be with them—think of Cain, Samson, King Saul.

But even though God’s hand was often with His people in the Old Testament, and that His Spirit was upon them, God had never come as a man. What is the significance of this for us today? Obviously, Immanuel is not only with us, but within us, through the promised Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17; Acts 2:38-39). But if Immanuel had not come, if Jesus the Son of God had not been born the Son of Man, He could not have shown us what God our Father is like; He said He and the Father are one, that if we have seen Him, we have seen the Father. It is only our incarnate Immanuel who could live as our Teacher and example, our Shepherd and guide, who could die for our sins.

Jesus said eternal life is knowing God the Father and His Son—knowing through personal experience, having a continuing and progressively more intimate relationship (John 17:3). He came as Immanuel, revealing God as One we can love and relate to as a person, helping us to understand the *koinonia* fellowship with God that is possible (1 John 1:3). In Him we see a Man who lived as we live, with the same feelings, temptations, and needs; we see our God who is able to help us triumph over every trial and temptation, to meet every physical, spiritual, emotional need we face. We can go to Him knowing He understands the issues we face because He has walked in our shoes.

Immanuel—God with us now, faithful to His promises to be with us always (Matthew 28:20).

Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name.... (Psalm 105:1)