

God with Us!

A Christmas Message

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(for a voice and sung version of this message go to www.thejoshuamission.net
click on "Messages" and look for the title, "God with Us!")

Greetings dear listeners, brothers and sisters in Christ. Have a very blessed and joyous Christmas for 2020, one and all! Hallelujah! Allow me to begin with the song, "Emmanuel." You have the lyrics here. (You can hear it sung in the voice version of this message at www.thejoshuamission.net click on "Messages" and look for the title, "God with Us!")

Emmanuel

Emmanuel, Emmanuel,
His name is called Emmanuel.
God with us, revealed in us,
His name is called Emmanuel.

Bob McGee 1976

Let me then point us to the Scripture from Matthew 1:22-23:

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 1:22-23 (ESV)

²²All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ²³"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).

This Scripture tells us that "Emmanuel" or "Immanuel" means "God with us." The song is a popular Christian song but is not known as a Christmas carol. Yet its lyrics zooms us in to the central meaning of Christmas: Our God from heaven has come to us in the infant son of Mary, named Jesus Christ. He is, as the angel declared, and as the prophet foretold, "God with us!" "Jesus" is Greek for the Hebrew "Joshua" and it means Yahweh is Salvation. "Christ" is Greek for the Hebrew "Messiah", which means, the Anointed One of God. So the very name of this baby born at Bethlehem by Mary declares that God has sent Him to save us. He brings to us, in His very person, the very presence of the God of heaven.

This year, 2020, is a tough year due to the pandemic. So much more, then, does this message of Christmas speak to us! If God is with us who can be against us? As Paul asked in Romans 8:31. In Romans 8:35-39 (ESV) he adds,

³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In Christ, God has crossed the chasm of our sin, which separates us from God. We are separated from Him because our sinfulness calls for the justice of His judgement. This separation means our death because He is the source of our life. But Christ came to cross this divide to give us life from death. He brings us God's forgiveness and cleansing by His own death and resurrection, for which purpose He was born and came to be with us.

In Christ, God has crossed the boundary between heaven and earth. Heaven is out of our reach. God in Heaven is out of our reach. But in Christ, our God has come near to us as our Father, reaching out to adopt us as His children. So we do not need to reach heaven. Christ has brought heaven down to us. He has done for us what we cannot do ourselves.

In Christ, God has crossed all human divisions to make all who receive Him as Lord and God, one humanity, one body, one universal community, in Him. In Christ, all barriers of race, language, cultures, customs, nationalities, no longer become division and strife. They are removed with our repentance from sin and submitting to Him as our Lord and our God. The human nature that He gives us is His own sinless humanity. So all divisions of sin and strife are broken. He brings healing and wholeness for all who are in Him.

In that Christ has come to us to be with us, all who accept Him for who He is are under His cover and protection. Never mind the pandemic, or any other dangers, or obstacles, or evil. He has defeated them all, including death itself! When we stand in Him by faith and obedience, we have nothing to fear. This does not mean that we are immune from facing such dangers and evil. It means either that He can intervene so that we are not affected by them; or that even when we are harmed and killed by these, it is not our end. He makes us whole in death by bringing us into His presence beyond this life. He will raise us up from the dead with a healthy new body so that we never face any such evil or death again.

Not only so, as the song points out, Christ is revealed in us. This means that as we walk with Him in faith and obedience, we can see Him in each other. On the same basis, He enables us to be His salt and light in this world. He makes it so that people around us can see Him in us! So in both ways, He is revealed in us.

So now God has reached out to be with us in Christ. Let us now respond to Him by rejecting sin and honour and worship Him as our Lord and our God. If you have not already done so, speak to Him by prayer your decision to reject your sins, to turn away from the life of sin, to Christ. Prayer simply means talking with God. We can speak to Him from our hearts as we may speak with a fellow human being honestly. But we address our words to Christ who is God. Ask Him to come into your life as your Lord and your God. And He will!

When anyone receives Christ into his or her life in repentance of sin, it is Christmas in the life and being of that person! For Christ is born in him or her. This is when the historical event of God coming to us in Christ when He was born of Mary, becomes the spiritual event of God coming into our lives by our receiving Christ as our Lord and our God. For all who have made this decision, may Christ live in you forever! For from that moment onwards, we live by God's grace, and in God's way. You will enter eternity, when Christ returns and brings to us into the New Heaven and New Earth (Revelation 21:1-2) wherein is eternal joy and glory.

May the God in heaven, who sent to us Jesus Christ, save you and bless you, by His Holy Spirit. HALLELUJAH!!! AMEN!!!