

Jesus: Immanuel

Matthew 1:18-25 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be pregnant by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ And her husband Joseph, since he was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. ²⁰ But when he had thought this over, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a Son; and you shall name Him **Jesus**, for He will save His people from their sins." ²² Now all this took place so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet would be fulfilled: ²³ "Behold, the virgin will conceive and give birth to a Son, and they shall name Him **Immanuel**," which translated means, "God with us." ²⁴ And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife,²⁵ but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he named Him Jesus.

Matthew 28:20 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

... behold, **I am with you always**, to the end of the age."

Introduction

Ask the congregation to circle two words: *Jesus* (v. 21) and *Immanuel* (v. 23).

My message this morning will revolve around the name of Jesus: *Immanuel*.

Speaking of the name 'Immanuel,' some of you may wonder why there are two different spellings: *Immanuel* vs. *Emmanuel*. Let me help you on this one.

Immanuel and Emmanuel are two different spellings, but they point to the same person Jesus, and they mean the same: with us God. This is how we ended up having two different spellings.

As you know, the original text of the Bible was written in different languages such as the Old Testament in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. In the 14th century, John Wycliffe translated the Latin Bible into English. But it is "William Tyndale who created an English translation of the Bible using Hebrew and Greek manuscripts as the textual basis" in the

16th century (<https://www.biblegateway.com/learn/bible-101/about-the-bible/early-english-bible-translations/>). Then, KJV followed in the 17th century and so forth.

By now, we have scores of English translations of the Bible. In the translation process, proper nouns such as personal names and the names of places had to be translated/spelled as close to as they sound in their original language, and that process is called transliteration.

So, **Immanuel** with an "I" is a transliteration of the original Hebrew word composed of "**Imm-anu**" (with-us) and **El** (God), while **Emmanuel** with an "E" is a transliteration of the Greek "**Emmanouel**" (<https://www.christianity.com/wiki/holidays/is-it-immanuel-or-emmanuel-biblical-meaning-and-significance.html>). Both spellings mean the same name.

By the way, in the Hebrew culture, naming was very important. When God gave someone a new name, He expected the person to live a life worthy of the name. E.g. *Abraham* (Father of Multitude). *Sarah* (Princess). *Israel* (persist/wrestle with God).

Content

In today's passage, two names were given to Christ by God. The first name was *Jesus* (v. 21). 'Yeshua': "*Yeshua is the Hebrew name for Jesus, meaning "Yahweh [the Lord] is Salvation." The English spelling of Yeshua is "Joshua." When translated from Hebrew into Greek, the name Yeshua becomes Iêsous, which is the Greek name for Jesus.*" (<https://www.learnreligions.com/jesus-aka-yeshua-700649>).

The other name given was *Immanuel* (v. 23)—*Im(m)-anu-el* (with – us - God).

Now, let's consider the meanings of those two names. First, the name 'Jesus' ('the Lord saves') is very appropriate for our Lord, because it exactly reflects His mission on earth—God sent Him to 'save' people from their sins. In fact, Jesus lived His life as exactly as God wanted Him to. Righteous and sinless, yet He died on the cross to save humanity from sin once and for all (1 Peter 3:18).

What about 'Immanuel'? Out of so many other names, why was 'Immanuel' given to baby Jesus? Of course, the right answer would be to *fulfill the prophecy* in Isaiah 7:14: "*a virgin will conceive a baby, and the baby will be called Immanuel.*" Yet, I believe there is another reason why God called Jesus Immanuel. The name 'Immanuel' best sums up who Christ is to us. Everything Christ does for us and with us is packed in one word: Immanuel—God with us. Let me explain why I believe so.

I have researched on the phrase, “God with us” in the Bible and discovered the following three meanings behind the phrase: **Companionship, Care, Commitment.**

First, *‘Immanuel’ means companionship.* ‘God with us’ means that God pitches His tent among us (Revelation 21:3). E.g., Consider Israel’s 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. During that period, God dwelt among the people of Israel. Whenever God was on the move, so were they. Whenever God stopped, they stopped too. Wherever God’s tent was pitched, so were their tents. God’s tent was called the Tabernacle (Exodus 25:9)—a fancy name for ‘tent’ or ‘dwelling place.’ Whenever they folded their tents and moved, so moved the Tabernacle. God was with them 24/7. Later, the Tabernacle was replaced by the Temple of God in Jerusalem. And, that Temple of God now is you: *If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.* (1 Corinthians 3:17).

We are that temple. God dwells in us through His Spirit. As God dwells within us, He journeys with us. Wherever we go, so does He. He keeps us company. The divine companionship makes our journey light (E.g., *Two are better than one. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart*--Ecclesiastes 4:9, 12).

Since He is with us, Jesus Immanuel also knows what we are up against (Remember: *even the hairs of your head are all counted*--Matthew 10:30). He is there whenever we need Him. He is there when we are happy or hurt. He sees our tears. He hears our groans. He comforts us (John 11:31). He shares our joys and concerns. He lends ears to our stories, even to our complaints (E.g., Prayer). He rejoices with us. He celebrates with us. He cries with us. He suffers with us. He endures with us. He encourages us to go on when we are in despair. In times of doubt, He assures us that He is in control. He knows everything in our lives. Jesus Immanuel provides us with a divine companionship.

Next, *‘Immanuel’ means that God cares.* He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7). He provides and protects. He provides us with our daily bread. He protects us from harm. He rescues us from all troubles [as He did for Joseph (Acts 7:9-10) and for Paul (Acts 18:9-10)]. He perfectly understands our weaknesses and temptations because He *“himself suffered when he was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted”* (Hebrews 2:18). He knows our limits so that He doesn’t allow us to have more than we can bear and provides us the way out of the temptations (1 Corinthians 10:13). In times of fear, He assures us with His promise: *Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will also help you, I will also uphold you with My righteous right hand’* (Isaiah 41:10). So, next time when fear assails you, declare to God, to yourself, and to your fear: *Even though I*

walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; (Psalm 23:4). Immanuel means that Jesus cares.

Finally, *'Immanuel' means commitment*. Jesus is fully committed to us. Even when we fail to be faithful to Him, He remains faithful to us all the way until we reach Heaven. E.g., In 'The Lord of the Rings' book, the gardener Samwise Gamgee remains faithful to Frodo his master throughout the journey to Mordor (the dreadful realm and base of the evil Lord Sauron). In the first movie of "The Lord of the Rings," the most moving part to me was at the end of the movie when Frodo insisted going on to Mordor to destroy the ring by himself, Sam said that he would go with him because he promised Gandalf the leader. Sam here can be compared to Christ. Frodo is you the believer. Like Sam pledged his company until the end of the mission, so does Christ us with a promise that He will be with us to the end of this age (Matthew 28:20). He never leaves us alone (John 8:29). Even when our best friends and family members forsake us, Jesus will never abandon us. He is forever faithful.

One thing we often forget is this: What is Jesus fully committed to? Your eternal life. He is fully committed to the sanctification of your body, soul, and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23) during your journey to Heaven. He refines/shapes/transforms us into Christ's image (2 Corinthians 3:18). He is the Potter, and we are the clay (Romans 9:21). He expects nothing but the best for us. Until we are fully transformed into His image, He silently and patiently works on us taking all the time He needs. He will finish the good work He has started in us (Philippians 1:6). He teaches and guides us into truth (Counselor/Teacher). He empowers us to do God's will in our daily walk with Him (Philippians 2:13). He wants us to learn from Him and of Him (Matthew 3:14). He wants us to be like Him in all the things we do and say. He wants us to demonstrate His character in us. He will never give up on us until He sees in us the complete image of Christ (Galatians 4:19). Immanuel means divine commitment.

Conclusion

Once I asked Sunwoo my wife what she thought of the meaning of Immanuel: *God with us*. Without hesitation, she said that it is the same as she and I are together in our marriage relationship. She didn't elaborate further, but I understood what she meant. Being with someone means covenant. It means commitment. It means faithfulness. It means protection. It means companionship. It means walking together hand in hand. Jesus does all these things with us, only much more than we can possibly imagine, appreciate, or understand.

This Christmas season is upon us. Let us remember the beautiful, wonderful, and eternal promise of God: Jesus Immanuel who died for our sins. Because of Him, in Him, and through Him, the LORD became our God, and we became His people. God and we are together in a covenantal relationship. Next time, when you say that God is with you, remember the covenant that you signed with God in the name of Jesus. The covenant is about this: You obey His voice, and He is your God, and you are His people. He is with us. He accompanies us. He cares for us. He is faithful to us. This covenant lasts for eternity, not only here on earth, but also in Heaven (Revelation 21:3). Jesus Immanuel is with us throughout this Advent season, to the end of the age, and for eternity. Amen.