

“God with Us”

Matthew 1:22-23

INTRO:

Christmas is a wonderful season of the year. The merchants think so because of the increased retail activity in their stores. As visions of sugar plums dance in our children’s heads, visions of full cash registers and sky rocketing sales figures dance in their heads. Christmas is a wonderful seasons for families also. If they get together at all during the year, families as a rule, come together at Christmas. Christmas is also a wonderful time of year for celebrations and parties. But retail sales, celebrations, and family get-togethers are not what Christmas is all about.

What is Christmas all about? It is all about a phrase we find at the end of **Matthew 1:22-23**. *“So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which is translated, ‘God with us.’”* Christmas is about *“God with us.”* It centers around God the Son entering into human history with a mission to glorify the Father and to redeem lost sinners. So, this morning, we are going to explore what it means that God came to be with us. Our exploration will follow three heads:

- I. Jesus Came Because God Always Wanted To Be With Us.*
- II. Jesus Came So That God Could Always Be With Us.*
- III. Jesus Came So That We Could Always Be With God.*

I. Jesus Came Because God Always Wanted To Be With Us.

A. Usually when we come to **Matthew 1:23** in the midst of this account of the miracle incarnation and birth of our Savior, we think about His virgin birth. While this is vitally important, this morning we will try to catch the emphasis that the Apostle Matthew put on this text that he quotes from **Isaiah 7:14**. What does Matthew say?

“Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which is translated, ‘God with us.’”

B. Why did God want to come and be with us? The answer to this question is found in the very beginning—in the first chapters of the Bible, the book of **Genesis**. God created humankind in the first place because he wanted to be “with us.”

1. You remember how God created the world? He made virtually everything by simply speaking it into existence. He called it out of nothing. But the account of the creation of man is different. He made man with His hands out of the dust of the ground and He breathed in him the breath of life and he became a living soul. God created man in His own image so that man and woman could fellowship with Him. We even read how that

God would come in the cool of the day and walk in the garden that He might be with man and fellowship with him.

2. Then SIN entered the picture. Humankind lost many things when they fell into sin.

We lost our perfect dominion over all creation. Thorns and weeds are the expression of creation's rebellion against man — they are a symbol of the curse that sin brought. It is not by accident that Pilate's men put a crown of thorns upon our Savior before He went to the cross.

We also lost his immunity to sickness, pain, and death. God had said, "In the day you eat thereof you will surely die." And as soon as they ate of that apple, they died spiritually, and began to die physically.

The greatest loss we suffered because of our sin was that we lost our relationship to God. God could no longer be "with us." The relationship of "witness" is described over and over again in the Scriptures by the phrase: "I shall be your God and you will be my people!"

3. When Adam and Eve sinned God was not unprepared, God had a plan. In **Genesis 3:15**, the first Christmas verse, God told Adam and Eve of His plan.

"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."

One would come and He would once and for all take care of the sin problem. He would put away sin so that "God could be with us again!"

C. But the plan would take all of history to work its way out. While the unfolding of God's plan was happening, God did not want us to lose sight of the plan, so He kept showing His people a picture of what would happen in His plan.

1. In the wilderness, after He delivered His people from Egypt through Moses, God spoke to Moses one day and said told him. ***"And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them."*** Exodus 25:8. He wanted them to build a Tabernacle — a big tent — that would become God's dwelling place ***"with His people."*** Again in Exodus 29:45 and 46 the Lord said, ***"I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them. I am the LORD their God."***

Although the people were sinful, the Tent was to be pitched in the middle of the camp. God could abide there because there was a separation between the Holy God and His unholy people.

2. They could not come directly into God's presence. They had to come constantly through an intermediary, the priests and always with sacrifices. This once a year, only

one person, the High Priest, could come and then only with blood into the very presence of God in the Holy of holies!

3. This was so serious because within the holy of holies stood the Ark of the Covenant. Standing on top of the ark were two golden cherubim and between the cherubim above the mercy seat dwelt the Shekiah glory of God —which was the presence of God with His People.

D. This was an imperfect arrangement — imperfect because the people could not come directly into the presence of God to worship Him. God was separate from them because of their sin.

1. Sin is always the issue when it comes to our separation from God. Sin was what broke our relationship with God in the first place, and sin is what keeps us from God still.

2. Although the arrangement was not perfect, it showed that God wanted to be WITH HIS PEOPLE!!!!

II. Jesus Came So That God Could Always Be With Us.

A. As we come to the New Testament the emphasis is the same. God desires to be with His people. In order that He might be with us, God the Father sent His son to into the world to be born of a virgin, to become Emmanuel, ***“God with us.”***

John catches a vision of this as he records his nativity passage. **John 1:14**
“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

The word translated ***“dwelt”*** means ***“to pitch His tent.”*** This takes us back to the greatest tent in history the Tabernacle. As God was in the tabernacle dwelling ***“With His People,”*** now in the Lord Jesus Christ, He was entering human history to be WITH US again!

B. But why did He come?

1. He Came In Order To Bring Us Back To Our God. He came to erase the sin problem and make it possible for us to once again fellowship with God! We cannot speak of the manger without also speaking of the cross. Jesus did not come so that we could manufacture neat little manger scenes to put on town greens and under our Christmas tree. He came to die.

2. The only way the sin problem could be taken care of was through the shedding of innocent blood. That is why when we come to the cross we hear a strange word on the lips of our Savior. ***“It is finished.”*** It means completed, over, mission accomplished. The penalty of sin was paid.

III. Jesus Came So That We Could Always Be With God

A. But there is one more aspect of this that we must not overlook. Jesus not only came so that God could always be “with us,” He came that we might always be with God.

B. In **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18** we read how the Lord will come back for us.

“But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord HIMSELF will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be WITH THE LORD. Therefore comfort one another with these words.”

We shall always be with Him!

C. Remember where we began, in the Garden of Eden, let me take you to where it all ends in **Revelation 21:1-3**;

“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is WITH men, and He will dwell WITH THEM, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be WITH THEM and be their God.”

That is what will make heaven, heaven! It will be the way that God had always intended for it to be. He will be WITH US!

Why did Jesus come? He came because God always wanted to be with His people. He came so that the Father could be with His children. And He came that we might always be with Him.

That is why when Matthew quoted **Isaiah 7:14** he underlined the name!

“Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” [now I especially want you to get this part so let me translate the name for you!] ***which is translated, ‘God with us.’”***

And that’s why there is a Christmas day.