

God with Us

(Matthew 1:22-23, et al)

Introduction

1. A bold declaration: Because of the work of God in our lives, something can happen *inside us*, which is peace-giving & life-giving, despite the difficult circumstances of life *around us*.
 - a. Jesus taught: In this world, we will have adversity, but take heart; He has overcome the world [John 16:33].
 - b. Through Him, we can experience peace that surpasses human understanding [John 14:27; Phil 4:7].
2. A prophecy about “God with Us”
 - a. 700 years prior to Jesus’ birth, Isaiah prophesied: Messiah is coming; it will happen in the future.
 - b. Matthew quotes Isaiah: [Matt 1:22-23] One of His names is Immanuel, which translates “God with us.”
 - c. This is a God who is real, a God who is with us.

Physical dimension of God with us

1. Jesus visited earth in human form, born of a virgin, as a baby, living amongst His creation for 33 years.
 - a. When we go through difficulty/despair, we may think: God doesn’t understand what I’m going through.
 - b. The response from Heaven: I do understand; I’ve walked in your shoes; I experienced life on earth.
2. Jesus as a man, God with us. He experienced:
 - a. Growing up in a family: He knows about normal, human, imperfect family life.
 - b. Education: He knows what it’s like to go through junior/senior high school (its equivalent at the time).
 - c. Getting a job & working hard: He joined the family business as a blue collar carpenter.
 - d. Pressure of leadership: He recruited a team, kept them on-mission, made hard, self-sacrificial decisions.
 - e. Friendship: Had very close friends, who ultimately rejected & betrayed Him.
 - f. Suffering: Emotional loneliness & agonizing, slow, physical death.

Emotional dimension of God with us

1. Not only does Jesus understand our difficulties of physical life here on earth, He cares about us.
 - a. “God with us” is not simply part of His job description; there is emotion involved in that promise.
 - b. *Illustration*: A dad who drove through a hurricane to be with his sons.
 - c. [1 John 3:1] Your Heavenly Father loves you; He is that kind of Dad.
 - i. He loved you before you were born (Psa 139:13-16), when you drew your first breath, when you draw your last.
 - ii. Even if your earthly mom/dad abandoned you, God does not (cf. Psa 27:10).
2. His commitment to be in a relationship with you is deeply emotional.
 - a. His highest priority in your life is for you to be in relationship with Him.
 - b. Most confuse Christianity with religion
 - i. Religion: A set of man-made rules & traditions, while living as if God is not a part of your life at all.
 - ii. Christianity: A constant relationship between the Heavenly Father & people who mess up & feel alone, but would rather humble themselves & receive redemption through Jesus’ blood.

Eternal dimension of God with us

1. There is an eternal dimension to this relationship too
 - a. [Jer 31:3] The Father’s love for His people is an everlasting love.

- b. Not just for a season, temporary or fading.
- 2. Illustration: A dad's confidence in Jesus & eternal life before he passed away.
 - a. In his final days, he felt Jesus' presence, and wasn't afraid to step into the next reality.
 - b. Immanuel (God with us) transcends this life, and goes on to the next; it's a forever deal.
 - c. Immanuel is God in relationship with us forever, through Jesus & His work on the cross.

Conclusion

- 1. Our view of "God with us"
 - a. Some of you know this God this Christmas
 - i. You know Him exactly the way I described.
 - ii. You could've jumped on-stage and told your story too of "God with us" this past year.
 - b. Some of you know God is there, but are not in relationship with Him
 - i. Would you respond to the God whose hand of friendship is extended if you're willing to take it?
 - ii. [Rom 10:8-13] teaches: Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus can come into a relationship with Him if they do so humbly & sincerely.
- 2. Our response to "God with us"
 - a. Those in relationship with Jesus: Affirm that Jesus is God with us over the past year.
 - i. Quietly rejoice, be glad in your relationship with Him, give Him praise for loving you because you love being in relationship with Him.
 - b. Those in whom God is at work: Take a step of faith.
 - i. Don't get involved in man-made religion; come into relationship with God who loves you: Immanuel, God with us.
- 3. Activity: "God with us" paper Christmas chain