

# Immanuel: God with Us

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Isaiah 7:10-16; Matthew 1:18-25

The first chapters of Isaiah have many glorious names of Jesus our Savior. Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given. He is the Wonderful Counselor and the Prince of Peace. He is the Branch of the Lord. He is a shoot of Jesse's stem who judges the world in righteousness.

But there is one name chosen to convey all the rest. And it is this name alone given to the first 12 chapters. It is the Book of Immanuel: God with Us.

This name is found in chapters seven and eight. He is the One who is to be born of a virgin, and who is prayed to in 8:8.

So as we read through these 12 chapters, Jesus, Immanuel, God with us, stands out.

For instance, the glory of God in Isaiah 6 is said to be the glory of Jesus by the beloved Apostle in John 12. Isaiah and the angels saw the glory of the Word who took flesh upon himself.

Likewise then, all the great neediness of Jerusalem and Judea in Isaiah's day, it is Immanuel promised to them who is the Savior and Remedy for tremendous mountain of sin and trouble and misery in these chapters. They really are great and high walls of iniquity and transgressions, of evil and sins.

Is it forgetting God and becoming full of rebellion and rejected worship in chapter one? Immanuel washes your sins as white as snow and renews the most evil.

Or is it pride and idolatry and the wrath of God upon fake and false religion in the second chapter? Immanuel has a glorious mountain of grace and peace for all the nations of the Earth!

Or perhaps the poverty of man-made ways and society in chapter 3 is the looming mountain of darkness. Oppressed by children and ruled by women! Or personal sinfulness and misery in chapter 5 is the issue: who in 5:18 drag sin behind them like a cart, who call evil good and good evil, are wise in their own eyes, and are mighty to drink.

Ah, to them he is the true vine, the true wine who makes you sober, the true good not just for time but eternity, who will drag us to Heaven if need be – He saves us and with a dead lift, raises us to glory!

Isaiah writes that if Immanuel were born right then, by the time he was weaned, the enemies they feared would be gone.

If He was their help in ages past, the point of our messages is how much more now that He has come? He has stepped fully into this glorious name above all names! Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever!

He is God to us; He is God for us; because He is God with us!

Understand that it was because Isaiah's people would not look to Him, hear Him, trust Him – that all these evils which fill these chapters like a large mountain range, was of their own doing. This might have been avoided. Instead even greater evil was on the horizon for them.

King Manasseh is just around the corner, who instituted child sacrifices, and sawed Isaiah in half.

And the southern kingdom was to follow the northern kingdom into captivity – and did not heed the warning right in front of them.

Our Christmas messages are a little different than the usual texts in just Isaiah 7, 9 and 11.

Immanuel encompasses all of this; and He is the rich and powerful answer to all of these horrific conditions; conditions very like our own!

So this presents our three points today:

First, Immanuel, God with Us, is our answer to our problems with God.

Second, Immanuel, God with Us, is our answer to our problems with others.

Third, Immanuel, God with Us, is our answer to our problems with ourselves.

In each of these, we cannot go line by line, but want to draw out from chapters 1-6, and will finish next week with the second half – 7-12.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter – the centrality of God is set forth in Isaiah's vision in the temple. His holiness can barely be endured by holy and sinless angels!

We are unclean before Him.

In chapter one, God refuses the worship of his people though they bring what he commands in the offerings and incense. These are a

stench to Him! Their hands are filled with blood! He calls them Sodom and Gomorrah! 1:10-15

Chapter two is no better. God there sits as Judge over all the proud in His day, over the wicked, over both the Gentiles and the Jews. They are to be crushed and destroyed – all of them!

What is the answer for God being our very enemy? It is Immanuel, God with us.

In Isaiah 6, the defiled lips are purged and forgiven.

In Isaiah 1, our sins are made as white as snow, and we are able to have fellowship with God, through His Son, who in chapter 53, takes our sins upon him.

At the end of our section, chapter 12, the God who had been rightly angry at our sins, turns his anger away, and He Himself becomes our salvation. Powerful message! Literally, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid; for Jah Jehovah has become my Jeshua, salvation.

This is an OT way of saying what Paul writes in Romans 8: God is for us, who can be against us? God was against us. We were without God! God was our enemy. But get this: God saves us – from God!

Of all the boundless and tremendous problems man faces, none comes close to his opposition and alienation from God.

Yet there are others here which cannot be ignored.

Let us touch on our problems with others.

In chapter one, we have an ugly list: the faithful city has become a harlot – no justice, murder is permitted, rulers are rebels, one with thieves and bribers, as orphans and widows are targets.

But passing over the pride in chapter 2, it is really the third chapter where you see a disintegrating society.

The nation is ruled by childish governors – verse 4 and 12; their policies are foolishness and bring oppression. The cost of basic goods is through the roof and includes shortages. Think of Russia and China under communism.

In 5-8, the collapse of the family. If we are not God's sons and daughters, we are part of the devil's family.

And it is especially vulnerable and dependent women who suffer the greatest under such anarchy and tyranny.

This leads them to shallowly focus all on beauty which is vain – 18-23. This is skin-deep life, that soon decays and is gone like a dead leaf!

Let us see this clearly for what it is! Let us recognize here not the threat of judgment, but the Lord already judging – making a people stupid and blind and shallow! This all reads like our own impoverished nation!

What is the answer to problems with society, with others?

Back in chapter 2, the first verses there, we are told of Immanuel's mountain raised up above all others!

It is a mountain of grace, love and peace. The nations stream to Immanuel and their swords and spears are made into tools for producing good crops – peace, joy, kindness, unity.

Jesus and His Book is the foundation for good culture and well-ordered nations in righteousness; for good rule, good laws, good order, with plenty of good freedom from above.

All those overflowing names in Isaiah 9:6-7, are unto his bearing up the government upon His shoulders.

His mountain, you see, is great than those of this earth. But when men exalt themselves over their fellow man, then we have the chaos we see in our own day.

When we see our world in such foolishness – let us cry out in prayer and repentance to the Lord to have mercy!

To quote an earlier prophet, whose people did not listen to him, Hosea in northern Israel, he urges us: “Come, let us return to the LORD. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us. He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day, that we may live before Him.” (Hosea 6:1-2)

What a dead and deadly world we live in. But Immanuel is the healer of the nations!

Joy to the world! the Lord is come:  
Let earth receive her King;  
Let every heart prepare him room,  
And heaven and nature sing.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,  
Nor thorns infest the ground;  
He comes to make his blessings flow  
Far as the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace,  
And makes the nations prove  
The glories of his righteousness,  
And wonders of his love.

Now we come to point three: Immanuel is the answer to our problems with God, with others or the world, and finally, with ourselves.

Let repentance and faith and humility and change begin at your own door, at your own house.

In the third chapter, we are assured of the black and white difference between those who know Immanuel, and those who do not:

Say to the righteous that it will go well with them, for they will eat the fruit of their actions. Woe to the wicked! It will go badly with him, for what he deserves will be done to him. 3:10-11

Which are you?

Looking out both ways from this parallel, we look back to chapter 1.

Here is a people who are worse than oxen and donkeys for they do not know God as their Lord and Savior.

They are illegitimate sons, corrupt, and running from the Lord. They are thoroughly weak and broken, and poor and low. They are almost like Sodom and Gomorrah! And at the end of chapter one, even the

strongest sinner is helpless before the unquenchable flames of God's wrath.

Then leaping forward to chapter 6 – they are sour and worthless grapes, full of bloodshed, lust, greed, drunkenness, ignorance of God's works, much more His presence; they are swallowed up by death and judgment. This the misery and punishment sin must deserve and receive. But they deny it although death and the grave yawn wide to wrap its mouth around them. None are exempt by their wealth or power. Their enemies are successful where they fail. They are addicted to sin, dragging it along though its way is a hard one. And they dare God to do something about it.

Look at them there in verse 20 – they are staring into a strange mirror – evil is good, good is evil; they put darkness for light, and light for darkness. Bitter and sweet are interchangeable.

See them thinking that they are wise and clever; though they are heroes of drunkenness, valiant for wrong.

Sinner are light like dust and ready for hell like dry kindling.

His hand is raised and shakes them, striking them to death – but they are not moved by his power, purity or anger.

Even when armies are marching straight at them, who are well equipped and poised to destroy – they do not repent.

This is the blinding stubbornness of sin; we cannot wash or remove it ourselves. This is a work beyond our intelligence, beyond our strongest feelings, beyond our firmest resolve.



Oh, it is only as we come to Jesus, God with us, God to us, God for us, that He can take them away, and make us new creatures, fit for heaven.

No angel, no king, no beloved family member, no money, no privilege, no work or religious act, can do what Jesus does, be what Jesus is, forgive and redeem as He!

We celebrate Christmas – a time of joy and peace and comfort.

But this message includes tears, and trauma, and terror.

For only those who mourn for their sins are in a blessed condition. Forgiveness, salvation is free, a gift. But it is always given with a change towards your sin. We are saved from our sins, not in them.

So either your sin will make an end of your tears for your evil, or mourning will make an end of your sin and evil. Those who laugh and rejoice in sin, who delight in their own ways and turn away from their God in favor of their sin, are standing over hell right now. Nothing stops them from falling in but the hand of God they despise and ignore.

Oh but what tears of joy in the penitent, the humbled. With that one will the Lord dwell and receive through His Son and His shed blood.

If God is against you, it does not matter what is for you; and if God is for you, it does not matter what is against you.

Praise be to God for his unspeakable gift of His Son. He so loved the world that He gave this gift of gifts that whosoever believes in him would not perish but have eternal life indeed!