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## The Six Names of Christmas--Immanuel: God with Us



**Part 30** (061119AM)

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This morning all of us humans have a real problem—we are an endangered species in this Universe, we are very fragile with a very short life span, only God can help us—and God is unapproachable.

On top of all that, we can't even see God and if we did, we would die.

Moses once had a conversation with God over 3500 years ago, as one of the only humans to ever get to know God up close. Here is what the Lord told him—

- **Exodus 33:20** *But He said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live."*

Paul in the New Testament reports the same facts about God. Paul's record is--

- **1 Timothy 1:17** *Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.*
- **1 Timothy 6:13-16** *I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, 14 that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, 15 which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate (dunastes 'power'), the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.*

Those verses should give all of us in this age of casual familiarity with God, a reason to pause.

### THE UNAPPROACHABLENESS OF GOD

Yes, God is our loving and gracious Heavenly Father—but He eternally dwells **in unapproachable light**. That means that God transcends us and is totally beyond us.

In Theology proper a Latin term is used to capture this reality; God is defined as *Deus absconditus*, which translates as 'the hidden God'.

If God had not initiated revealing Himself to sinful and fallen mankind in the Garden of Eden and onward through the Old Testament; if God had not chosen to come out of His holy habitation—mankind would have hopelessly lived and died without knowledge of Him.

Christmas is the time we celebrate God coming to be with us; no longer sending others, like prophets, priests, kings, and angels to give us His Word. Christmas is God Himself no longer sending—but coming.

We should reflect upon how fortunate we are that God has mercifully and graciously come to us in our dreadfully lost condition. The writer of Hebrews described our distance from God quite simply as, "our God is a consuming fire" (**Heb. 12:29**).

The imagery of God as blazing and consuming fire aptly expresses God's holy distance. Because of His holiness, God is eternally inaccessible to man. Our God always lives in an atmosphere of absolute purity, far too holy for mortals to ever enter. Note that Hebrews says that "our God is [not was!] a consuming fire."

But to solve the problem of the God who is unapproachable, God Himself came to be with us—as one of us, to die for the whole world of lost sinners.

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## GOD COMES TO US

The New Testament opens in the Gospels with Matthew and Luke introducing God—as He invades humanity.

God who came to enter the world and take upon Himself humanity was God the Son, Jesus Christ. This incarnation is described in the term Son of Man as God the Son becomes 100% man—yet without sin.

Christ is first introduced as this Son of Man with the genealogies that open Matthew and also are listed in Luke. Christ came as the Son of Adam, as well as through the family line as also the Son of Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David.

So when God invades the Earth He comes as the 100% human descendant of Adam, through a family line that stretched unbroken from the Garden of Eden, through the total defilement of pre-Flood humanity, into the ark, out through the mountains and deserts of the Middle East, into the palaces of the kings of Israel and then Judah, through the Exile and finally born as a member of the line of the faithful remnant in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century worshipers at Herod's Temple to God.

Christ's coming was first presented as the coming of a human, the Son of Man, encompassing all of mankind in our needy condition, weaknesses and frailties—yet of course He comes always without sin. So that summarizes Matthew (1: 1-17) and Luke's (3:23-38) lists of thirty-three verses of genealogies...but the story goes on. In Matthew chapter one, verses 21 and 23 we are presented with the **greatest truth we will ever be confronted with.**

- **Matthew 1:21** *And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."* 23 *"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."*

The greatest truth of Christianity is--that the instant of our salvation, when our sins were forgiven instantly by the gracious work of Christ on the cross--**we got all of God!** The One who saves us is God with us! We have all of God in the person of Christ who dwells in us!

Once a year we as a nation celebrate when God came to live among man upon the earth. That event is often what we call Christmas.

Jesus is revealed in God's Word as being Immanuel a Hebrew word that means 'God with us'. But what exactly does God with us mean—and even more important how does that change the way I live each day? The Gospels answer that as we follow Jesus and see what happened to people in His presence.

When God is with us, walking around as a man named Jesus—what happens? That is what the entire 89 chapters of the Four Gospels capture for us. What happens when Jesus is right here—with us?

That is the subject of the Gospel by John. In each chapter John illustrates what happens when Jesus as God enters the equation. It is amazing how each life changes and each situation is never the same...

## KNOWING GOD WITH US TODAY

For the three and one-half years of the Gospels, Jesus' followers could know the wonder of God with them and have any need met—if they could find Him. The blessing of God with us started at Christmas, but triumphed at the cross and empty tomb. After Resurrection Day Jesus said now I am with you always (**Matthew 28:20**). That means that Jesus Christ, God the Son who is with us—is available anywhere, anytime, and to anyone.

Therefore, any sin can be forgiven; any doubt can be overcome; any sadness can be comforted; any disappointment can be stopped; any fearfulness can be arrested; any loneliness can be ended; and any defilement can be cleansed.

Today, we know that Christ is alive! So think about Christ being constantly available within you to help your fears, doubts, pains, and temptations. He is only a prayer away—so call upon Him!

The greatest blessing of Immanuel is how Jesus is now available anywhere, anytime, and to anyone.

To help us see what Jesus wants to do as God with us today, we have the New Testament record. If we just limit our examination to one event in each of the chapters in the gospel by John we can understand how Jesus was meeting people right where they were—just as He wants to do right here in our lives today:

- Watching Nathaniel sit and think under a tree, Jesus answered his questions (1:46-49). The Lesson: **You can bring all your questions about the future to Jesus.**
- Attending a wedding, Jesus rescued the servants when the wine ran out (2:9). The Lesson: **You can bring your emergencies big or small to Jesus.**
- Waiting up, Jesus explained salvation to Nicodemus when he slipped to Christ's side in the dark (3:2). The Lesson: **You can bring your spiritual struggles, even your doubts about salvation, to Jesus.**
- Sitting on the well, Jesus revealed His true identity to a seeking woman overflowing with sins (4:18-19). The Lesson: **You can bring your sins past, present, and future to Jesus.**
- Approaching the paralytic lying on the ground, Jesus healed him when he was hopeless and helpless (5:6). The Lesson: **You can bring your limitations, weaknesses, besetting sins and all to Jesus.**
- Coming across the waves to a storm-tossed boat, Jesus quieted the fearful disciples (6:17-19). The Lesson: **You can bring all your fears to Jesus.**

- Crying out for anyone who thirsts to come to Him, Jesus promised to give “rivers of living water” (7:37-38). The Lesson: **You can bring your longings to Jesus and find in Him complete satisfaction.**
- Looking into the heart of the adulterous woman who stood stained by her sins, Jesus showed her mercy and forgiveness (8:3-11). The Lesson: **You can bring your deepest stains to Jesus.**
- Finding the blind man in his darkness, Jesus opened his eyes (9:6-7). The Lesson: **You can bring your confusing times to Jesus.**
- Opening the door to a safe and secure home for lost sheep, Jesus offered safe pasture (10:9). The Lesson: **You can bring your longing for security to Jesus.**
- Defeating death and its hopelessness at the grave of Lazarus, Jesus offered new life (11:25-27). The Lesson: **You can bring your fears about death to Jesus.**
- Accepting the worship of Mary who loved Him so, Jesus received it as a sweet fragrance (12:3-8). The Lesson: **You can bring your love and pour it out upon Jesus.**
- Confronting His disciples with their dirty feet and hearts filled with pride, Jesus washed away their sin (13:5-15). The Lesson: **You can bring your besetting sins to Jesus for His cleansing.**
- Assuring His disciples when they had troubled hearts, Jesus promised that they had a future mansion with Him in heaven (14:1-6). The Lesson: **You can bring your future to Jesus.**
- Coming close to prune away unprofitable parts when lives were fruitless, Jesus caused that pruning to bear fruit (15:2). The Lesson: **You can bring all of your life to Jesus.**
- Promising to convict when hearts were sinful, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to keep His children on track spiritually (16:7-9). The Lesson: **You can bring your secrets to Jesus.**
- Praying for sanctification by the truth of His Word, Jesus promised to open His children’s understanding of the Scriptures (17:17). The Lesson: **You can bring your need for life changing Bible-study times to Jesus.**
- Watching over His disciples in their darkest hour, Jesus looked out for them in spite of their weakness in the garden (18:8). The Lesson: **You can bring your times of weakness to Jesus.**
- Caring for His mother even as He died, Jesus set an example of the importance of family (19:25-27). The Lesson: **You can bring your family and each individual need and entrust them to Jesus.**
- Finding Thomas in his doubt and bringing him to faith, Jesus lovingly reassured him (20:25-29). The Lesson: **You can bring your doubts no matter how dark, painful, and embarrassing to Jesus.**
- Standing on the shore when Peter needed restoration, Jesus lovingly inspired Peter to greater service for Christ (21:15-18). The Lesson: **You can bring your failures whether public or private to Jesus.**

I encourage you to go back through the above list and pause on the bold action statement at the end of each point. Think about what Christ wants to do in your life personally.

It can help cement these truths in your mind if you say each of them out loud:

- “I want to bring my questions to You, Jesus;
- I want to bring my emergencies to You, Jesus;
- I want to bring my struggles to You, Jesus”; and so forth.

Do you see the power of personalizing Christ’s presence in your life today? Believe that He is just as near to *you*, and ask for His help!

The greatest truth of Christianity is--that the instant of our salvation, when our sins were forgiven instantly by the gracious work of Christ on the cross--***we got all of God!*** The One who saves us is God with us! We have all of God in the person of Christ who dwells in us!

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