

4. God with us

August 3, 2014

There is not a single human being who is more scrutinized, criticized, ridiculed, ignored, taunted, blasphemed, and name called than this person. A mere mention of His name often brings up jeers, contempts, or even fights from one side and at the same time the others give their devotion, respect, adoration, and worship.

No one is more controversial than He is. Of course, by now, you know that I was referring to Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord.

I like what Napoleon Bonaparte said about Jesus: "If Socrates would enter the room, we should rise and do him honor, but if Jesus Christ came into the room, we should fall down on our knees and worship Him."

During the Christmas season that seems to start right after Labor Day in America commercially, people talk about the Baby Jesus in a manger. The Christmas Nativity scene is so familiar that people don't even think about the deep meaning of it. It was prophesied at the Garden of Eden and throughout the OT Scriptures. In the Book of Isaiah, we find a concentration of the birth of Jesus in chapters 7 through 9.

Please don't take this study as another Christmas story in the middle of humid summer, rather let's look at it from the fresh viewpoint so that we can get the deeper meaning of God's love for all of us.

A. IMMANUEL

Isaiah 7:1-17 Now it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to make war against it, but could not prevail against it. 2 And it was told to the house of David, saying, "Syria's forces are deployed in Ephraim." So his heart and the heart of his people were moved as the trees of the woods are moved with the wind. 3 Then the Lord said to Isaiah, "Go out now to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-jashub your son, at the end of the aqueduct from the upper pool, on the highway to the Fuller's Field, 4 and say to him: 'Take heed, and be quiet; do not fear or be fainthearted for these two stubs of smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria, and the son of Remaliah. 5 Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah have plotted evil against you, saying, 6 "Let us go up against Judah and trouble it, and let us make a gap in its wall for ourselves, and set a king over them, the son of Tabeal"-- 7 thus says the Lord God: "It shall not stand, Nor shall it come to pass. 8 For the head of Syria is Damascus, And the head of Damascus is Rezin. Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be broken, So that it will not be a people. 9 The head of Ephraim is Samaria, And the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If you will not believe, Surely you shall not be established."'" 10 Moreover the Lord spoke again to Ahaz, saying, 11 "Ask a sign for yourself from the Lord your God; ask it either in the depth or in the height above." 12 But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the Lord!" 13 Then he said, "Hear now, O house of David! Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary my God also? 14 Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel. 15 Curds and honey He shall eat, that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good. 16 For before the Child

shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that you dread will be forsaken by both her kings. 17 The Lord will bring the king of Assyria upon you and your people and your father's house--days that have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah."

King Ahaz was a wicked bad king of Judah. He worshiped all the other gods and even sacrificed his own son to a pagan deity Molech according to 2 Kings 16.

The attack by the northern kingdom Israel, a.k.a. Ephraim and Syria took a great toll against the southern kingdom Judah. The Lord allowed it to happen because they had forsaken Him. When this allied force attacked Jerusalem, Ahaz and his people were shaking in fear instead of trusting the Lord. Because he rejected the idea of trusting the Lord, he had nothing to hold onto.

Faith in God's promises is the only way to find peace in the midst of our troubles.
Isaiah 26:3 You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.

In God's eyes, these two kingdoms's invasion was nothing. Just as He told Ahaz through Isaiah, Assyria destroyed Syria and Israel 65 years later.

The Lord offered a sign for Ahaz so that he could trust God, wouldn't you know, he refused it piously. Ahaz wouldn't trust the Lord because he secretly allied with Assyria. Besides, if Ahaz saw the sign from the Lord, he was obligated to believe in the Lord. That is why he refused.

Some might say, "Hey, Ahaz was doing what the Scripture said in Deuteronomy and what Jesus said in Matthew." Yes, the Bible tells us not to tempt or test the Lord.

Deuteronomy 6:16 "You shall not tempt the Lord your God as you tempted Him in Massah.

Matthew 4:7 Jesus said to him, "It is written again, ' You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'"

But when the Lord tells you to test Him, you test Him. That's what an obedient servant of God does.

Speaking of testing the Lord, there is one place where the Lord tells all of us to test Him, but 90% of Christians don't because of their selfishness. Do you know what that is? Tithing. If you don't tithe, you are disobeying the Lord's commandment and you are responsible for your own rebellion.

Malachi 3:10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this," Says the Lord of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it.

This sign had two fulfillments:

1) The immediate fulfillment

Some biblical scholars think that this was immediately fulfilled when a young woman in the royal household shortly married, conceived a son, and unknowingly naming him "Immanuel." Before this boy came to eat solid food, Israel and Syria were defeated. It is also possible that God is just referring in a figurative way to a year or two period of time.

Actually the name 'Immanuel' was a rebuke to Ahaz since he rejected the Lord and didn't trust Him.

2) The ultimate fulfillment

In the Bible, only four ways are noted to produce a human body:

- Without a man or a woman – God did to Adam, made from the dust of the earth
- With a man, but no woman – God did to create Eve from Adam 's side
- With a man and a woman – as all humans are born
- With a woman, but no man – as Jesus was born, having an earthly mother but no biological father. It was important that Jesus be born of a virgin that He might have a sinless human nature, conceived by the Holy Spirit. The modernist who denies Christ's virgin birth denies His eternal Godhead and deity. Either He is God, or He is a really bad con-artist.

The virgin birth of Jesus Christ is one of the key doctrines of Christianity . Because if Jesus Christ is not God come in sinless human flesh, then we have no Savior .

For all practical purposes, some of history 's greatest minds have grappled with the identity of Jesus ever since. But it 's worth noting that during the earthly ministry of Jesus, many people were perplexed about who He really was.

Jesus never became God, nor did Jesus ever cease to be God. His deity – which means His divine Lordship, the fact that He was God – was pre -human, pre-earthly, pre-Bethlehem, and pre-Mary.

In the incarnation, in that moment when Jesus came to this earth and was born of the virgin Mary, He didn't lay aside His deity. He was God before He was born as a human baby, and He remained God after He became a man.

By the way, in case you are wondering why Jesus' parents didn 't name Him "Immanuel", there was a great reason. Angel Gabriel who was dispatched by the Lord told him to do so:

Matthew 1:20-21 But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

The name 'Jesus' which means "Yahweh is my Salvation" describes His mission, while 'Immanuel' which means "God with us" describes who He is.

B. A STONE OF STUMBLING

Isaiah 8:14 He will be as a sanctuary, But a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense To both the houses of Israel, As a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

This portion of the Scripture was quoted by apostle Paul in Romans and 1 Corinthians as well as by apostle Peter in his first epistle chapter 2.

If any proud unbeliever should boast and say, "I have chosen my own destiny – my own disobedience and my own stumbling – to show God that I have the final and ultimate say in my life; I have the power of ultimate self- determination; and I can frustrate the purposes of God with my own self- determining will" – if anyone boasts in that way, God responds with the awesome words: "No, you can 't; you only think you can. But you will discover sooner or later that whatever you choose will have to be granted by Me." There is no turning back once an unbeliever goes to hell, because the purgatory is a figment of imagination and was a marketing strategy by the Medieval Roman Catholic priests to make more money.

One can not be confronted with Jesus and remain neutral; feigned neutrality is rejection, the same as open hostility to God.

C. FOR UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN

Isaiah 9:6-7 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

If you'd like to count years jammed into these two verses, I'd say minimum of two thousand plus years – from the birth of Jesus through the rapture, the Great Tribulation period, and into the Millennium, or even past that. It not only talks about the first coming of Christ, His birth, but also the Second Coming and His reign on the earth.

I am sure that unbelievers would like to keep Jesus in a manger as a baby so that they can continue in their sins, but someday all of them will have to stand in front of His Judgment Seat that is known as the Great White Throne Judgment.

Jesus has many names. We have five of them listed here. Please note that it is "Wonderful", not "Wonderful Counselor" as some Bible teachers teach. His name is wonderful and nothing dull about Jesus. As "Counselor," Jesus has the wisdom to rule justly. It is more than a Dr. Phil moment.

As the "Mighty God," He has the power to execute His wise plans. Of course, Jehovah's Witness people claim that Jesus is not God. He used to be Michael the archangel before he lived on earth. On earth he was a man who lived a perfect life. He died on a stake, not on a cross and later he was resurrected as a spirit.

If you ask those JW people about this verse, they would agree that this is about Jesus. Additionally, they would go on to say, "Jesus is a mighty God; his father, Jehovah, is the only Almighty God." Then, you ask them, "How many gods do you have?" They will quickly answer, "One." Obviously and sadly, they are very, very confused people.

"Everlasting Father" does not suggest that the Son is also the Father, because each Person in the Trinity is distinct. "Father of Eternity" is a better translation. Among the Jews, the word "father" means "originator" or "source." For example, satan is the "father [originator] of lies" in John 8. If you want anything eternal, you must get it from Jesus Christ, because He is the "Father of eternity."

Jesus the "Prince of Peace" is the One who makes peace, especially between God the Father and man.

D. APPLICATIONS

1) Jesus is the complete expression of God's love, the deepest reflection of His grace, and the perfect picture of His heart.

2) One can not be confronted with Jesus and remain neutral; feigned neutrality is rejection, the same as open hostility to God.