

## Jesus: Immanuel and Savior

Matthew 1:18-25

December 23-24, 2021

Rev. Brian Bill

### Video: [Christmas Confusion](#)

How are you doing hanging on to Christ this Christmas? Does Christmas seem confusing or is it just a chaotic time of year for you? I submit if you want to understand Christmas, you must get to know *who* Christ is, and what He came to *do*. We could say it like this: *The mission of the cross is hidden in the message of the cradle.*

We're wrapping up our series called, "The Cast of Christmas." Three weeks ago, we pondered multiple prophecies which were fulfilled with pinpoint precision by the coming of Christ. Two weeks ago, we focused on how the angels gave glory to God and declared the message of good news of great joy for all the people. Last weekend, we studied the shepherds and learned how God brings us through a specific process so we can make spiritual progress.

Matthew's gospel begins with an extended genealogy of Jesus to show us His humanity. The narrative in [Matthew 1:18-25](#) describes His deity. My wife Beth will come now and read this passage.

*<sup>18</sup> Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. <sup>20</sup> But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." <sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: <sup>23</sup> "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). <sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, <sup>25</sup> but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.*

For our purposes today, we'll focus on [verses 21-23](#) where we're given two names of Jesus. Are you aware there are some 200 names of Jesus in the Bible? In Bible

times, names didn't just distinguish or label a person; they revealed the very nature of an individual. In the Old Testament, the term for *name* means "*individual mark*" and communicated an individual's essence. In the New Testament, the word for *name* comes from a verb meaning "*to know.*" To know the names of Jesus means to personally know His personality.

In college, as a new Christ-follower, I had a poster in my dorm room which listed many of His names. Here are just a few: *Advocate, Lamb of God, Lord of Lords, King of Kings, Man of Sorrows, Teacher, Alpha and Omega, Dayspring, Anchor, Judge, Bread of Life, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, Immanuel, and Jesus.*

These last two names are found in our passage. Let's examine their profound meaning.

- ***"You shall call His name Jesus...and he called His name Jesus"*** (Matthew 1:21, 25)
- ***"And they shall call His name Immanuel..."*** (Matthew 1:23)

Both names are defined for us.

- ***"You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins"*** (Matthew 1:21). Because God is *for us*, He *forgives us*. That's the mission, or purpose of Jesus.
- ***"And they shall call His name Immanuel (which means, God with us)"*** (Matthew 1:23). Because God is *with us*, He *forbears with us*. That's the message, or presence of Jesus.

*The mission of the cross is hidden in the message of the cradle.* Let's consider these two names in reverse order.

**1. Immanuel.** Because God is *with us*, He *forbears with us*. Listen to verses 22-23 again: ***"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel' (which means, God with us)."*** Details surrounding the birth of Jesus were predicted by the prophets, fulfilling prophecies made hundreds of years earlier. This quote is from Isaiah 7:14.

The word ***"behold"*** can be translated, ***"Lo and behold!"*** and was used to arrest attention. What God was about to do was intended to be shocking, startling, and

surprising. The definite article **“the”** indicates God had in mind one specific virgin named Mary, whom He had chosen to become pregnant by the Holy Spirit.

The virgin will conceive and **“bear a son.”** This shows the humanity of Jesus. The next phrase shows His deity: **“And shall call His name Immanuel”** (**“Im”** means *“with,”* **“anu”** means *“us,”* and **“El”** means *“the mighty creator God”*), which means, *“The strong God with us.”* Or more literally, *“The ‘with us’ God.”* God is not a distant deity. Growing up, I viewed God as majestic, mighty, and mad at me I was 19 when I learned He is also gracious, loving, and near.

When Adam and Eve sinned, death entered the world, and a separation took place between the Creator and His creation. For example, boundaries were established around the perimeter of Mount Sinai when the 10 Commandments were given (Exodus 19:12) and walls surrounded the Most Holy Place in the Temple (1 Kings 8:6). Only certain people were allowed to approach God at certain times and when they did, they had to bring certain sacrifices to be found acceptable.

But, in the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4), God parted the heavens and came down to dwell intimately and personally with His people. We sang about this in the song, “Oh, What a Glorious Night.”

*Let the earth  
Receive her King  
I know that love has come,  
All were amazed when  
They heard how God came  
Down on this glorious night*

John 1:14 captures what Christmas is all about: **“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”**

Several years ago, I read a powerful post by John Pavlovitz called, *“Holidays and Empty Chairs.”* I decided to read the article again since there are a couple empty chairs in our family this year. Here’s an excerpt.

*“Though you may indeed have so many reasons to feel fortunate and to give thanks, what this season is now marked by more than anything else – is absence. Surrounded by noise and activity and life, your eyes and your*

*heart can't help but drift to that quiet space that now remains unoccupied: the cruel vacancy of the empty chair...*

*"Though they're supposed to nurture gratitude and deposit peace within us, the holidays have a way of magnifying loss...in the middle of all the celebration and thanksgiving, reminding us of our incompleteness, our lack, our mourning. The empty chair is different for everyone, though it is equally intrusive...For some it is a place of a vigil...for some it is a fresh wound...this may be the first time the chair has been empty for you, or you may have grown quite accustomed to the subtraction..."*

*"For some the chair is a memorial; the stark reminder of what was and no longer is, of that which never will be again. It is a household headstone where we eulogize and grieve and remember; a face we squint to see, a hand we stretch to hold, a voice we strain to hear."*

I appreciate how the writer did not wrap up his post with pleasant platitudes or try to tie everything together with a big red bow. This is how he ends: *"Right now, I just want you to know that I see your waiting, your grief, and your pain, and that I wait and grieve and suffer too. In that way we all sit together in this, gathered around this same incomplete table. Maybe that is all we can offer one another: our compassionate presence in the face of this terrible absence."*

I would add the only other thing I've found helpful is the presence of Immanuel: God is for you...He is with you while you're weeping...and He will never leave you or forsake you. Allow Immanuel to fill your emptiness as you give your grief to God.

*The mission of the cross is hidden in the message of the cradle.*

**2. Jesus.** Because He is Immanuel, He is with us...and forbears *with us*. Because His name is Jesus, He is *for us*...and forgives us. Let's look again at verse 21: ***"She will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."*** Interestingly, the angel didn't say to Joseph, like he did to Zechariah, ***"She will bear you a son..."*** because Joseph was not the physical father of Jesus.

Those who knew Him best in the Gospels simply referred to Him as ***"Jesus,"*** using that name around 600 times, though other titles like ***"Jesus Christ"*** and ***"Lord Jesus"*** were also used.

Jesus, or “*Iesous*” (Yay-soos), is the Greek form of a Hebrew name, translated as “*Joshua*” or “*Yeshua*.” The full name is “*Jehoshua*” which means “*Jehovah saves*.” When naming the baby “*Jesus*,” God was saying He would save people through Him because the mission of Jesus is to save people from their sins. As Savior, Jesus came to set us free from sin, and to deliver us from the dominion of the devil.

Later, when Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to the Temple, a man named Simeon came up to them and said this about Jesus: “***For my eyes have seen your salvation***” (Luke 2:30). As he left, a widow named Anna spoke about the “***child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Israel.***”

Because we’re sinners, we need a Savior. Sin is basically “*missing the mark of God’s standard.*” The Bible says all of us have sinned and deserve judgment from God. Jared Wilson writes: “*All you have to do to qualify for the gospel is to be a sinner. We are born pre-qualified! The bar is set so low. The only way to miss out, is to think yourself above it.*”

I came across this picture of a mug with Santa on it containing these words: “*You’re all naughty*” with Romans 3:10-12 referenced at the bottom: “***None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.***”

Let’s see if I can explain the crux of Christmas. By means of the virgin birth, Jesus entered the world guiltless of the sin of Adam. Since He was born of Mary, He is truly human; because He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, He is free from inherited sin handed down from Adam. Jesus is both the son of Mary and the son of God. Jesus is both ordinary and as Immanuel, He is extraordinary. He is Son and Savior, holy and human, fully God and fully man. He is God with us and God for us. He forbears and He forgives.

Jesus came to die in our place as the full and final sacrifice for our sins. Immanuel took on human flesh, lived the perfect life and then died as sacrifice for our sins, facing the full fury of the Father’s righteous wrath in our place. In exchange, when we believe, we receive His righteousness. His substitutionary death demonstrated the Father's love and satisfied His justice, resulting in the salvation of all who repent and receive Him by faith. This wonderful gift is available free of charge.

As Immanuel, Jesus is fully able to stand in our place and take our punishment. He paid for our sins precisely because He had no guilt or shame of His own. 2 Corinthians 5:21: ***“For our sake, He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”***

Jesus came down to lift us up, reversing the curse of Adam’s sin.

- When you feel alone, remember Immanuel is *with you* as one who forbears – He will hang on to you!
- When you feel lost, remember Jesus is *for you* as one who forgives – He hung on the cross for you!

At the cradle we see that God is *with us*, at the cross we see that He is *for us*, and when He returns, He’ll come to *get us*. If you want to learn more about the second coming of Christ, I invite you back for one of our two services on Sunday.

The Savior came to this world, and sadly, He was turned away. John 1:10-11: ***“He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him. He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him.”***

The world did not receive Him because they did not recognize Him. They did not recognize Him because they were unwilling to relinquish control of their lives and admit their sinfulness. How about you? What’s keeping you from fully receiving Christ right now? Don’t wait to clean up your life because you’ll never be clean enough. It’s been said, *“Salvation is not something we achieve but something we receive.”*

The very next verse tells us how to become a member of God’s family: ***“Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.”*** Christ came to rule over the universe, and to reign in our hearts.

John Newton, who wrote “Amazing Grace,” made this statement shortly before he died: *“My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things – that I am a great sinner, and that Christ is a great Saviour.”*

A Sunday School class performed an unforgettable Christmas pageant one year. As Mary and Joseph made their way slowly up to the inn, Joseph knocked on the door. Wally the innkeeper [I know the Bible doesn’t mention the innkeeper...just

work with me] came to the door and bellowed, *“Who’s there?”* Joseph answered softly, *“I am looking for shelter for me and my wife.”* Wally opened the door and said, *“You’ll have to look elsewhere. There is no room in the inn for you.”* Joseph tried another approach, *“But you don’t understand. We have traveled so far, and my wife is heavy with child, and she needs to rest.”*

At that point, Wally just stood there staring intently at Mary. During this long pause, the audience grew anxious. The prompter off stage began to whisper, *“Wally, say ‘No, be gone!’ ‘No, be gone!’”* Finally, Wally looked at the young couple, took a deep breath and said, *“No, be gone!”* Joseph put his arm around Mary as she put her head on his shoulder and they shuffled off. The innkeeper was supposed to shut the door and go back inside. But Wally didn’t do that. He just stood there and watched the forlorn couple walk away.

And then the pageant took an unexpected turn. Wally’s mouth dropped open. His brow creased. And his eyes began to fill with tears as he pleaded, *“Joseph, wait a minute. Come back. Bring Mary with you!”* And then a smile beamed across Wally’s face as he blurted out, *“You can have my room!”* Mary and Joseph didn’t know what to do and the audience became anxious again. The quick-thinking Joseph saved the program when he replied, *“Oh no, the stable would be just fine, really.”*

The Savior is still looking for space today. Our world seems to be too crowded for Him, just as it was in the first century. The only spot found for Him was on a Cross.

Ponder this: *Jesus had to be Immanuel to be Savior, and once He becomes your Savior, He becomes your Immanuel.*

Do you have room for Him? Hang on to Christ this Christmas by opening the door of your heart to Him right now.

There are so many ways to describe Jesus. This week, I heard an interview with a pastor from Scotland who used four words to describe Him. I can’t get them out of my mind. I hope they’ll stick with you as well.

- Jesus is glorious
- Jesus is great
- Jesus is good
- Jesus is gracious

*The mission of the cross is hidden in the message of the cradle. I like what Jonathan Edwards said, "You contribute nothing to your salvation except the sin that made it necessary."*

Are you ready to prepare Him room right now? Will you give Him your sins, so He can give you, His salvation? Don't delay. Commit yourself to Christ today.

### **Invitation**

*"Lord Jesus, I don't understand how You can love me when I don't measure up. I confess I am a sinner and I repent by turning from the way I've been living. Thank You for being with me and for me. I need You to be my Immanuel and my Savior. Thank You for forbearing and forgiving me. Please save me from my sins and from myself. You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I desire to live under Your lordship for the rest of my life. Thank You for not only being born, but for dying in my place and rising again so I can be born again. I now receive the gift of salvation and forgiveness by asking You to come into my life. Make me into the person You want me to be by enabling me to bring glory to You and good to others. Give me the thrill of hope so my weary soul will rejoice in You. In the name of Immanuel, Yeshua, who is Savior, Christ, and Lord, I ask this. Amen."*

**Closing Song: "Oh, Holy Night."**