

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Immanuel: God With Us

by Dan Trygg

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.”

Isaiah 7:14

“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.”

John 1:14

“And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; ¹⁷ that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you.”

John 14:16-17

“You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God lives in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.”

Romans 8:9

“To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations: which is Christ in you, the hope of the glory.”

Colossians 1:27

The dwelling of God with people is a theme that is central to the story of redemption. As a result of sin, Adam and Eve felt empty, naked, and hid from God when He came to walk with them in the evening of the day. They were excluded from the Garden of Eden, and their intimacy with God was fractured. Yahweh, however, spoke of a plan of redemption. The “seed of the woman” would crush the head of the serpent, though the serpent would “strike him” on the heel (Gen. 3:15). Both of these were mortal wounds, the crushing of the head and the poisonous strike of the serpent. Nevertheless, this was the first glimpse of redemption and restoration. **The defeat and destruction of the serpent would come by a human being, ...a “seed” of a woman..., but it would come at the cost of his own life.**

As humanity spread throughout the world, people “called upon the name of Yahweh” (Gen. 4:26; 12:8). They sought Him and worshiped Him, but their approach to God was accompanied by the offering of the blood of animal sacrifices, a reminder of their need for redemption. **God’s promise to Abraham was that He would make him great, and that through his seed “all the families of the earth would be blessed.”** The covenant promise was passed down to son, Isaac, and grandson, Jacob, who became known as Israel. The entire family migrated to Egypt, and were provided for there during a time of famine. **Centuries later, the Egyptians oppressed them, and God raised up Moses to lead the nation of Israel out of bondage.** Through powerful plagues and miracles, Yahweh brought them out, and Moses led them to Mt. Sinai. There, **Yahweh made a covenant with them to be His people.** He taught them that He alone was the only true God, and He was holy. **They were to be devoted only to Him, and were to follow His commandments.** His awesome appearance was accompanied by fearful displays of power and glory, ...thunder, earthquake, loud trumpet sound, and His thunderous voice from atop the mountain. **He instructed them to build a tabernacle, ...a complex of tents designed to buffer His holy Presence from the people, so that He could safely travel in their midst.** When the people quickly forgot the covenant, and turned aside to idols, God threatened to not travel with the people, “lest I destroy them”. Moses interceded, saying, “If Your Presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here. For how then can it be known that I have found favor in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we, I and Your people, may be distinguished from all the other people who are upon the face of the earth?” (Ex. 33:15-16). **Moses clearly understood that it was God’s Presence with them that made Israel different.**

Throughout the next 900 years, the recurring message was that those who honored and obeyed God would receive His blessing and help. Those who disregarded and disobeyed Him experienced the withdrawal of God’s blessing and help. The prophet summarized this principle to king Asa of Judah, “Yahweh is with you when you are with Him. And if you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you” (2 Chron. 15:2). Because the nation was disloyal and disobedient to Yahweh, and sought out other gods, He withdrew His protection and help. **With God’s Presence, the people prospered and remained free, but as they withdrew from Him, they came to experience the disciplines and judgments He had warned them of** at the time of Moses.

As Assyrian aggression pressed in from the north, the northern kingdom of Israel and the Syrians threatened to attack Judah, and replace the Davidic king with a puppet of their own. God spoke through Isaiah, saying that this would not take place. Instead, those two kingdoms would be defeated and removed. **He spoke of a sign of His protective Presence. A young woman would bear a child, and by the time he would be able to know good from evil, those kings would be removed. This child would be called Immanuel, “God with us”.** The Assyrians came and took away the Israelites to the north, and the Syrians. Then, by God’s hand, they were also driven away.

The apostasy of Judah also eventually brought upon them defeat by their enemies, and even exile from the land of promise. The prophet Ezekiel, who was himself living in exile, saw a vision of the glory of God’s Presence

depart from the temple in Jerusalem. Soon afterwards, the Babylonians breached the walls, sacked and destroyed the city. The nation that was to be a “light to the nations” by virtue of the righteousness, wisdom and blessings that would come by honoring Yahweh and keeping His instructions, instead became an object lesson of the darkness, destruction and despair that would come to those who disregard God. **Without God, they were no different, and made no positive difference in the world around them. They had wanted to be like other nations, and lost their distinctiveness.**

But God was not done with them! After 70 years, He called them back from the nations, and opened the way for their return. It was only a small remnant of what had been a large nation. The evidence of God’s sovereign hand in their preservation and return encouraged those who trusted in Him. They rebuilt the temple and the walls of Jerusalem, and resettled much of what had been the area of Judah. **Soon, however, the age-old problems of disbelief, disregard of God, and disobedience to His commands surfaced again. The prophets of that time repeated the call of God, “Return to Me, that I may return to you”** (Zech. 1:1-16; Mal. 3:7-18). Again, the Presence of God would bring blessing and healing to the nation, and there would be a distinction between those who know and serve Yahweh and those who do not. “All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land,” says Yahweh (Mal 3:12).

God was about to do something very different, however. He had spoken of the need for a new covenant. The problem with the old covenant given through Moses was that their hearts remained unchanged (Deut. 29:4). **God would give them new hearts, hearts who desire to know Him, and which will desire to keep His word** (Jer. 24:7; 31:33,34). He would remove their lifeless, sinful, stony hearts, and replace them with hearts that were alive, that would be inclined to obey Him. **He would cleanse them and put His Spirit in them** (Ezk. 11:19,20; 36:26,27). **He Himself would be in them!**

In order to do that, however, He had to come to dwell among us. Our sin could only be paid for and removed by a substitution, ...a sinless, fully-human sacrifice of infinite worth, who could fully identify with humanity, take on their sin, and die in their place to satisfy the requirement of the law. Because God loved humanity, His Word came to dwell among us. **He fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy in a greater way: A virgin conceived and bore a son, who was “God with us”. He lived among us to display and make known God’s grace and truth.** When He was of full age, He went about proclaiming the Good News that the kingdom of God was at hand. He went about demonstrating that kingdom by breaking the bondages of disease, demonization and even death. People could be cleansed and made new by trusting in and following Him. He clearly and repeatedly claimed to be God, ...God walking among them. He called and trained disciples to be able to explain the significance of what He was about to do, and then He allowed His enemies to arrest Him and put Him to death. **On that cross, He who had never sinned took upon Himself the sins of the entire world. But, ...on the third day He arose, because death had no power over Him. His death and resurrection become effective and active for those who trust in Him.** To those who believe Him, ...who look to Him in faith for their salvation..., to them He gives the authority to become born-from-above children of God (Jn. 1:12).

But, as we saw, it was God’s purpose to change the hearts of His people. **Jesus did not just “die for our sins”.** The apostle Paul wrote, **“He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf”** (2 Cor. 5:15). **God is looking for the same thing He always had been. He is looking for a people who would live for Him,** ...a people through whom He could display His goodness, and through whom He could bless the families of the earth.

But, here is the key. We can never do this by ourselves. *HE never intended* that we try to do this by ourselves. **On that last evening, when Jesus was with His disciples, He told them that He was going to send the Holy Spirit.** He would be a Counselor, like Jesus had been, but only better: Jesus was limited to being in one place, because He was a man in whom the Father was working (Jn. 14:10; Acts 2:22; 10:38). Now, however, the Holy Spirit would come and dwell *within* each believer. **Everyone of us who trusts in Jesus has the Holy Spirit. He is dwelling inside of us to enable us to live in a way we never could before.** He has come to give us a heart to know God. He has come to enable us to obey God, ...to even *want to* obey God! He is working inside of us to desire to do God’s will, and to empower us to carry it out (Phil. 2:12,13). His presence in our lives can produce the fruit of God’s character within us (Gal. 5:22,23). Jesus said that those who believe in Him would be able to do the same miraculous works that He did (Jn. 14:12). Why? Because He has anointed us with the Holy Spirit, just as He had been. Paul said that we who are in Christ have all been made to drink of one Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). **We are to live by the Spirit, walk by the Spirit, be filled with the Spirit and be led by the Spirit. Just as “God anointed [Jesus] with the Holy Spirit and with power, and He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him”** (Acts 10:38), **we have been given the same calling and the same resource. God is with us!** We are no longer to live for ourselves, but for Him. And as we do, “all the families on earth will be blessed”.

Paul said that there was a mystery that had been hidden for ages and generations, but has now been revealed. This mystery is “Christ in you, the hope of the glory” (Col. 1:26). God wants to make this mystery known among the nations. **The glory refers to the indwelling radiant presence of the Holy Spirit. It is Immanuel, God with us. God wants us to know what we have, and confidently determine to step forth in the power of His Presence working in us.**