

## **IMMANUEL! GOD WITH US!**

Matthew 1:1-25

Key Verse 1:23

“The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” — which means, “God with us.”

**First, the genealogy of Jesus Christ the Son of David (1:1-17).** Look at verse 1. “A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham.” In the New Testament, there are two places which talk about Jesus’ genealogy – one in Luke’s gospel, and the other is this Matthew’s gospel. Luke was a Greek, and he emphasized the Universal Messiahship of Jesus. So in Luke’s gospel, Jesus’ genealogy traces back all the way to Adam, the first man. But in Matthew’s gospel, Jesus’ genealogy starts from Abraham, the father of faith, and the author Matthew suggests Abraham and David as two representatives of Jesus’ genealogy. In this way, Matthew proclaims to the Jews that Jesus is their promised Messiah, whom God had mentioned to Abraham and David. God said to Abraham, “Through your offspring, all peoples on earth will be blessed.” Jesus brings blessings of God to all peoples on earth. God also said to David, “When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” (2Sa 7:12-13) Jesus is the king in the line of David forever.

Abraham did not have an official title – he was just a patriarch. But David had a title – king. Jesus is the Son of David, so, he is King. We live in democratic society; so we are not familiar with a monarchy system, even the terms such as king and kingdom sound a little old dated. But the Bible shows that we are in the monarchy system, and Jesus is our King and we are his people. It means that we have to see everything from a totally different view – as we believe in Jesus Christ, we are in a totally different paradigm. Toward the President of the USA, we just shake hands with him, and if we don’t like his political view, we protest and even threaten him, saying that we will not vote for him any longer. But not so with the king! Once a king is king always, and especially for Jesus, because he is eternal king. We must show him absolute loyalty. When he asks us to do something, we must do it whether we like it or not; if he asks us to go to a certain place, we must go there, even if that place is very dangerous, or even if we have to sacrifice a lot. Actually, Jesus expects such undying loyalty from us, saying, “Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer...Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Rev 2:10) Many peoples’ mistake is that they forget about their new status as citizens of Jesus’ kingdom; they approach the Bible with their old way of thinking, worldly way of understanding, democratic view – they cut off any part they don’t understand, keeping such liberal attitude toward God. They

do not realize that the whole paradigm has changed. They are the ones who reject Jesus' kingship over their life completely. Jesus is our King, eternal king, and we must show our absolute loyalty to him, obeying his command, his will and purpose even to the point of death.

Many people make a decision to read the Bible, so they open the New Testament, and starts from the first book, the Matthew's gospel, expecting something amazing and divine. But they are shocked at this long genealogy. Even before finishing this genealogy, they lose their interest, and fall asleep. But this genealogy contains deep truth. In the genealogy, we find five women; usually, in the genealogy, people don't include women; the genealogy is the genealogy of men. But Jesus' genealogy has five women, and three of them are non-Jewish women – Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth. Tamar was a Canaanite woman, the daughter-in-law of Judah, but the son she bore through Judah, her father-in-law became God's covenant person. Rahab was a Canaanite prostitute in Jericho when the general Joshua was going to destroy the city of Jericho. By faith in the God of Israel, she stood on Israel's side, and hid the two Israelite spies from her own people; in human eyes, she was a national traitor, but God blessed her and she became the great grandmother of king David. Ruth was a Moabite woman, the descendants of Lot through his daughter – her background was very bad. But she entrusted her life in the God of Israel and came to Israel following her-mother-in-law. God blessed her, and she became the grandmother of king David. All these three women had very suspicious background, but they had one thing in common that they sought God with all their hearts and strength. They did not deserve to be used by God because of their suspicious life background. But when they sought God wholeheartedly, God accepted them and included them into the genealogy of the Messiah, the king's line. This is how God deals with people. We are not the Jews, not the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob by blood. But God still accepts and blesses us when we seek him with all our hearts and strength. When we have faith in God, God uses us in his salvation work very preciously.

In verse 6, the author mentions about Solomon and his mother Bathsheba, saying, "David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife." As the result of David's adultery, Solomon was born; usually, such a son is excluded from inheritance. But God loved Solomon and chose him to succeed David as king. We may wonder, "Why?" "How come?" Yet, that's what God did, out of his immeasurable grace. In genealogy, people record only splendid things to show off their family legacy and skip this kind of scandalous story. But the author Matthew intentionally talks about this, and other Gentile women's cases to show that the history of Israel is also the history of God's grace. When we think about this carefully, we too see God's amazing grace upon us. There were many others who were smarter than us, who were more sincere than us, who were more qualified than us. Yet, God chose us as his servants and does his work through us. We have nothing to brag about, but the grace of God upon our life.

In verse 17, the author divides the whole genealogy into three sections – fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen generations from David to the exile, and fourteen generations from the exile to the Christ. The first fourteen generations from Abraham to David shows God’s great vision for Israel people and their rejection. God called Abraham and told him that He would make him into a great nation and that all peoples on earth would be blessed through him. In this vision, God wrestled with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and trained them. After taking the Israelites from Egypt, God told them what great vision he had for them, saying that they would be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation for the whole world. A kingdom of priests is a nation all whose people are priests. God’s plan was to establish Israel as a kingdom of priests so that they would minister all nations on earth; God indeed had a great plan. But, the Israel people didn’t like this idea; instead, asked God to assign a human king so that they would be just like other countries around them. So, God established David as a king. The period of the second fourteen generations covers the whole monarchy of Judah (from David to the exile); this period of time can be described as the period of the prophets when God worked hard to warn Israel people and help them repent and accept His will through the prophets; but they rejected God’s will and became more and more worthless. God could not work with them any longer, so he destroyed them and sent them to the exile; despite God’s great vision and efforts for them, they failed completely. The third period of fourteen generations covers the time between the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, and the first book of the New Testament, Matthew – this time of period is called, “inter-testimonial period.” During this time, God did not send his prophets to them; God remained silent. Since they were not available to work with Him, since they were not willing to accept His will for them, He worked all by himself behind the scene, proceeded the redemption history and completed it by sending Jesus to the world as the Christ. When we check out these three sections of the genealogy, we can see that the redemption work is the task planned, proceeded and completed by God. When humans were available, God included them to work with Him, but when no one was available, God worked continually all by himself and completed it. Today, it is still the same. God is looking for people who are willing to accept his will; when he finds them, he shows his vision for them and trains them, establishing them as a source of blessing for the world; God works and fulfills his will through them; but when people reject his will upon their life, God still proceeds his work behind the scene and fulfills it. Indeed, our God has been at his work to this very day, sometimes, working together with people when they are available and willing to work with him, and sometimes, all by himself. Indeed, zeal of the Lord will fulfill the task. Let’s pray that we may respond to God’s calling, accepting God’s will upon our life, working together with him for Gods’ world salvation plan.

**Second, “You are to give him the name Jesus” (1:18-21).** Look at verse 18. “This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.” Luke’s gospel focuses on Mary, but Matthew’s gospel on Joseph. They were pledged to marry. According to the Jewish marriage custom, they were legally husband and wife, but for one year after this pledge, they stayed at their parents’ house instead of living together. Now their hearts were dedicated to each other, earnestly waiting for their wedding day. How happy Joseph was as he was thinking about his beautiful bride Mary! As a carpenter, maybe, he was preparing some wedding furniture; maybe, he was making some cute wooden mascot as a symbol of their complete dedication to each other; maybe he was planning for their honeymoon. Even though he was working overtime, he was not tired at all at the thought of seeing the smiling face of Mary. Joyful humming came out of his mouth very naturally. He would sing of Mary, “Ave Maria. Ave Maria. Maria, Maria, you make me laugh. Hahaha!” Indeed, he was the happiest person in the world.

Then, one day, he heard what he could not believe – Mary was pregnant! “Oh, no!” It was unbelievable. He was betrayed. Actually, she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit, but how could he even imagine such a thing? Even if she tried to explain what had happened, who could believe that? A pregnant teenage girl says that she is pregnant by the Holy Spirit!? No way! Joseph felt like the heaven collapsed right on him, and the earth melted right under him. He was really crushed. People do so many crazy things when such things happen to them – some people, in anger, pull out their guns, and others curse their betrayers. But how did Joseph deal with this problem? Look at verse 19. “Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.” He could have let out his anger and sense of betrayal, but if he did so, Mary would be exposed to public disgrace, or even, she would be endangered to be killed according to the law. Instead, he chose to swallow such sorrow, pain, and anger all by himself, covering her shame. Even in such a pain, he was mindful of Mary, and for the sake of her happiness, he decided to divorce her quietly. He was really a man, so noble and mature. How could he do that? Verse 19 says that he was a righteous man, meaning that he had right relationship with God. When he was in the relationship with God, he was not controlled by his ill-emotion; he was not defeated by this challenge. Instead, when he was in the right relationship with, he had strength to deal with this challenge. This is a secret of how we can become mature, cool and awesome. When brothers are in the right relationship with God, they become real men, so noble and awesome and mature – best husband candidates for all the sisters. When brothers are so noble like Joseph, many families can be preserved and many sisters can be comforted. Let’s pray that all our brothers may seek the right relationship with God by obeying God’s command and doing what God wants them to do wholeheartedly.

But things didn't go as Joseph had thought. Look at verses 20 and 21. Let's read these verses together:

**20**But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in his dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. **21**She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

This was the first Christmas message delivered by an angel of God, given to Joseph. Personally, how happy Joseph must have been when he realized that Mary was not unfaithful to him. He was relieved from such pain and sorrow. How happy he must have been to find that God was doing something great through his marriage. Moreover, the first Christmas message was really awesome. "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." It was the proclamation that God's promised Messiah was going to be born in his family. The name he would give the son Mary would deliver, was Jesus, which means, "The Lord saves," because he would save his people from their sins. Here, the phrase, "his people" indicates that such salvation from sin in Jesus is available only for his people; that's why people must accept him as their king. Who is Jesus? He is the one who saves us from our sins! Amen.

Many people suffer from their sins. What they did, which they should not have done, taunt them with guilty conscience, sense of shame, and fear; the mistreatment, betrayal they experienced in their youth leave them deep wounds and scars that some of them are angry, some of them are fearful, and some of them are so defensive so that they would not have any more damage to their souls. Their words and actions, their life's directions and goals, their heart's desires are all affected by their sins; simply, their whole life is infested by sin. Who is Jesus? He is the Savior who saves his people from their sins; once they experience this salvation from their sins, their sins are not counted against them any longer, and thereby, they can start all over again as if nothing bad has happened in their life. Jesus sets them free from the power of sin. And they are overjoyed like a calf newly released from the stall. This was what happened to us! When we accepted Jesus, we were instantly set free from our past sins that had bothered us so much – our conscience was free to thank God, love God like an innocent child, and we started a new life as if nothing bad had happened in our life; we could dream big things for God, saying, "I will be a source of blessing for the world." Jesus saved us from our sins so that we could live as innocent and beautiful children of God – no longer sin-soaked miserable people, but children of God. That was salvation from our sins. Once we experienced salvation from our sins in Jesus, we could forgive those who have crossed in our way, and we could even love them; our relationship with others was restored, and even with God that we can now sincerely love God and pursue Him. Who is Jesus? He is our Savior who saves us from our sins.

Christmas is the time when we celebrate the birth of our Savior Jesus; when we truly appreciate his salvation from our sins, we have a reason to rejoice and be thankful in this Christmas season.

**Third, “Immanuel” “God with us” (1:22-25).** Look at verses 22 and 23. Let’s read these verses together:

<sup>22</sup>All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:  
<sup>23</sup>“The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” — which means, “God with us.”

This is the comment of the author Matthew about the coming of the Savior Jesus. There might be several other prophecies he could have talked about in regard to Jesus’ coming, but he only mentions about this – Immanuel “God with us.” To him, God being with us, lowly human beings, was the most amazing thing. A virgin, named Mary, gave birth to a child – this is a universal event, so shocking and amazing. Then, people may ask, “What’s the meaning of this miracle?” Its meaning is, “Immanuel,” which means, “God with us.” This prophecy of the virgin birth, “Immanuel, God with us” is from Isaiah 7. About 700 BC, when the Southern Kingdom Judah was attacked by the joint forces of the Northern Kingdom Israel and Aram, God sent his servant Isaiah to Ahaz, the king, and told him that He would help them and protect them; God even told him, “Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights.” (Isa 7:11) – the sign of God’s confirmation that he would really help them – any sign! God really wanted to help his people, and he really wanted them to trust in Him. But the king rejected God’s offer, because he had already decided to rely on some tangible help from the Assyrian Empire, rather than relying on God’s help. At this, the prophet Isaiah was upset and rebuked the king, saying, “Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” By their unbelief, by rejecting God, they really tried God’s patience – they were really bad, despicable. Yet, God’s desire to be with them was bigger than their sin. Despite their rejection, God still gave them this sign, the sign of the virgin giving birth to a son – this was God’s confirmation that He was with them – Immanuel, God with us.

Matthew experienced this grace of God when Jesus visited his tax booth, and called him to follow him. Matthew was a tax collector – a public sinner, national traitor, a despicable person in the eyes of all Israel people. He pursued money wholeheartedly, but now, with a lot of money, he was miserable, because no one was with him; he was lonely, depressed and suicidal. He was like a flickering wick that would die any moment. Then, Jesus visited his tax booth, and invited him to follow him. Even if Matthew was like a flickering wick, Jesus did not snuff him out; instead, he desired to protect him, heal him, revive him and restore him by offering him friendship and life together with

him. Through this grace of Jesus, Matthew was restored and became a great spiritual leader, the apostle Matthew. To Matthew, Jesus was his Immanuel God who was with him. So, with such confidence in God's unfailing love, he could say to all peoples on earth, to all kinds of despicable sinners, "Immanuel, God with us!" Today, God is with you. God wants you to accept Him and have life together with Him, because God has a burning passion for you; He has unfailing love for you.

The virgin birth of Jesus is God's sign for all peoples on earth – This sign stands out so much in the entire human history, drawing all peoples' attention; everyone throughout the world, generation after generation, can read this sign. Then, what is the meaning of this sign? It is "Immanuel, God with us!" This virgin birth shows God's burning desire to be with us; He wants to be in our day to day life. It means that He wants to help us, and He wants us to accept Him and have life together with Him. His desire to be with us is so great that He carried out such a huge propaganda in the whole world; it was like God shouting to all peoples on earth, "Immanuel, God with us!" No one should say, "No one understands me," because God cares for us. Today, let's accept God's burning passion to be with us – He wants us to have life together with Him. Don't reject him any longer, but turn to Him and enjoy life together with Him.

Look at verses 24 and 25. When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. He realized that God was going to use his family for His special purpose – this would affect his marriage, his family and his entire life. But he willingly accepted it, offering his marriage dream, his family life and everything to God for His purpose. He was a great man. When Mary gave birth to a son, he gave him the name Jesus.

One Word: Immanuel "God With Us"