

God With Us

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[0 : 00] Well done, well done. Well, again, welcome. If you are new here, welcome to our time. If you are visiting, please make an effort to let us know who you are.

My name is BK and I have the pleasure of serving as one of the pastors. One of the things that we hear often when it comes to the theme of Christmas is what is the real meaning of Christmas, right? You just need to watch a Charlie Brown TV show or anything else that we see on our news or the TV, sorry, kids shows, whatever. They're always trying to make that emphasis.

But today what I want to address is what I believe the true meaning of Christmas, which is why we need Jesus. In other words, why we need Christmas.

So this morning, or this morning, this evening, I want to take a look at one phrase, one verse that we find in the Christmas story. And I want to look at the significance because I believe it perfectly describes our plight as man and our desperate need for a Savior.

[1 : 14] It is found in Matthew 1.23. And it is what the angel reads to Joseph, or not reads to Joseph, but says to Joseph in his dream.

He simply states, Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which means God with us.

The prophecy that this angel shares with Joseph is found in the book of Isaiah, exactly in Isaiah 7.14.

And before I describe for you what the significance of that prophecy is, I believe we need to properly understand the context surrounding the prophecy because it just tells us so clearly how lost we are as men and women before God.

Isaiah 7.1 begins, In the days of Ahaz, the son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah.

[2 : 25] So this story happens around 740 years before Jesus would come. King Ahaz is a man who sits on the throne of David.

He rules in Judah in the city of Jerusalem. And if you know or remember your history of Israel, Israel had three kings under a united Israel.

Remember we had Saul, David, Solomon. And after Solomon, there was a split. There was a northern kingdom which we call Israel and a southern kingdom which is called Judah.

And Judah was seen as the faithful one to the covenants of God. And in this kingdom, this man named Ahaz sits as king.

2 Kings 16.2-3 tells us that Ahaz was 20 years old when he began to reign. And he reigned 16 years in Jerusalem.

[3 : 25] And he did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord of his God as his father David had done.

As he was of the bloodline of David, God had made a promise to David and Ahaz did not, shall we see, continue in the faithfulness that David did.

The text reads, But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel. And what he's informing us is the kings to the north which were not faithful to God.

And it tells us, He even burned his son as an offering according to the despicable practices of the nation whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel.

So this is the context upon which this prophecy is going to surround. So I continue from Isaiah 7. In the days Ahaz, the son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, Rezan, the king of Syria, and Pekah, the son of Ramallah, the king of Israel, came up to Jerusalem to wage war against it.

[4 : 40] But he could not amount an attack against it. So he's got two different kings laying siege to Jerusalem. How bad was it?

Verse 2 tells us, When Ahaz was told, Syria, in league with Israel to the north, the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees in the forest shake before the wind.

So here's this king desperate to find a solution because he knows his destruction is before him. And what 2 Kings tells us, he decides to solve this problem.

And what he decides to do is he writes the king of Assyria. And the king of Assyria at that time is the ultimate world power. They control the greatest amount of land.

They have the greatest army at the time. And he essentially says, Come and rescue us from the hand of the king of Syria and from the hand of the king of Israel who are attacking me.

[5 : 48] And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the Lord and in the treasures of the king's house and sent a present to the king of Assyria.

The king of Assyria listened to him. The king of Assyria marched up against Damascus, took it, and he destroyed everyone there.

So he sends this, pretty much he empties his treasury and he pays off the king of another nation to come and bring peace to his land.

Sounds like the smart idea, right? No matter at what cost, this was the way to save his people, his kingdom. It seemed like it was a rational idea.

But what 2 Kings doesn't tell us, but what Isaiah 7 does tell us, is that before that decision was made, a prophet by the name of Isaiah was commanded to go before the king.

[6 : 53] And the prophet said to Ahaz, be careful, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands at the fierce anger of Rezin in Syria and the son of Ramallah in Israel.

So what Isaiah does, he brings this petition to the king. God will save you. In fact, in order to prove himself, Isaiah says, God has told me that you can ask anything of me, ask anything of the Lord, and he will do it.

Test him. And it can be anything from the highest heights of heaven and the lowest parts of the earth. Test God. See that he means what he says.

Ahaz decides to not do this. He smugly responds, I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test.

Ahaz says, Ahaz sells his soul and his people's and God's treasury to Assyria.

[8 : 16] Ahaz believed that he could solve his problem without God. Does anyone here recognize Ahaz?

Ahaz is us. Ahaz is the reason we need Christmas. Ahaz says, God comes before you, says, If you do it my way, you will receive great blessings and joy from me.

But what do we often do? We say, Sorry God, I've got this. I'm going to do it my way.

How many of us who can count the ways that we have made a mess out of our lives and the mess out of those that we love and that we continue to make more messes because we fail to turn to the Lord and to his wisdom?

You see, Christmas is for those who trust themselves rather than trust in God. Ahaz believed that he could trust his charm and his money to get him out of the problem.

[9 : 29] And what we don't know is that he bankrupted his nation and he made himself a slave vassal kingdom to Assyria and they eventually came in and destroyed him.

Does anyone here see this pattern in their own life? By doing it your own way, you've given someone or something power over you.

Maybe it's the desire for a relationship or to be loved in the way that you want. Maybe it's the pursuit of gold riches or attention or popularity that you seek.

Perhaps it's the lure of alcohol or drugs or anything else to numb the pain. In your desire to do things your way, let's be honest, it always begins with the best of intentions.

Man, if I could get myself out of this financial hole, God will be so proud of me. I know, Lord, this relationship isn't of you, but I'll show love and show your grace and mercy.

[10 : 42] Now, I want you to pay attention to something. The offer that God makes to Ahaz is astounding.

This is a man the Bible declares is evil and did no right in the eyes of God. In fact, he was so vile, he sacrificed one of his own children.

But God, being God, still offers to save him. And he does so because of a promise he made long ago to King David.

God was making good on a promise. And God was willing to save Ahaz. Ahaz. Perhaps that is you here tonight.

You realize that God has no right to save you. You are more than aware of your shortcomings, your faults, your failures, and dare I say that word, sin, your rebelliousness, your foolishness.

[11 : 56] Or maybe you're on the other side of the coin. Perhaps you've always thought that Christians were weak because they couldn't do it on their own. I'm strong.

I'm smart. I'm no fool. I have no need for God. Jesus is for the weak. And you want to know something?

It's true. If you understand your Old Testament, the biggest problem with Israel is that God chose them as a nation so that they could be a mighty nation.

not because they were a mighty people, but because he was a mighty God. Amen? That was the whole point, that God wanted to rule over them.

And he wanted to use this simple people, a rebellious people, to honor him in a way that would show the world what it is to follow after him.

[13 : 01] So this day tomorrow, the first Christmas that we celebrate, God didn't choose a king, but he chose someone of a kingly line.

Two individuals to be earthly parents for the Son of God who offered nothing to Jesus except a willingness to be obedient to God.

You see, when Ahaz reject God's offer, God still made good on his promise to David and prophesied doom on Ahaz.

But the promise that Ahaz gives, that is given, is written in Isaiah 7.14. Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign.

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel. Emmanuel means God with us.

[14 : 11] God in our nature, God at peace with us, and God in covenant relationship with us.

God in covenant relationship with us. God in covenant relationship with us. The crazy thing is, Ahaz had the opportunity to walk with God, to know God as one with him, to know the blessings of knowing the king, the Lord over all.

But he chose himself. God in covenant relationship with us. Self. And thankfully, God chose David. God chose David, who later chose Joseph, who as he sat there and contemplated divorcing Mary, wanting nothing to a woman he believed that was unfaithful to him.

But when God sends an angel and says, do not fear, Joseph obeys. Joseph trusts. Joseph puts his life in God's hands.

[15 : 26] Maybe it's that way with you too. Maybe it's easier for you to be as Ahaz and persist in your unbelief, perhaps strengthen your unbelief and argue with God than surrender to the wisdom of God.

What's interesting in this very first Christmas, we find two young teachers, teenagers, sorry, willing to take God at his word. children, barely age of the children that we saw in the video.

Joseph and Mary had nothing. But maybe that's what we need. Nothing. Maybe God needs to strip us of our self-worth, our self-accomplishments, or just our self.

Maybe that is the place where we need to be brought before the Lord. Mary responds in Luke 1.46. She says, My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior. For he has looked on the humblest state of his servant.

[16 : 44] For behold, from now on, all generations will call me blessed. You see, what Luke tells us is that through Mary, we are connected to the promises of Jesus.

Through her genealogy, we find out it's traced all the way back to Adam. And what that means for us is, Jesus is for everyone.

It doesn't matter what race, what nation, what country you come from, what language you speak, Jesus is for everyone.

In fact, later on, in Jesus' first appearance before the synagogue, he tells them that he is there to proclaim good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to recover the sight of the blind and set liberty to those who are oppressed.

Let me ask you something. Are you enslaved to your lusts, your desires? Is there something that's got such a hold of you that you cannot let go? Maybe it's an addiction, a person, a way of life.

[17 : 51] Do you find yourself constantly caught up in foolishness, unable to live wisely? Are you oppressed? If you are, Christmas is for you.

And if you are, Jesus is here to set you free. You see, the reality is God no longer comes to us and say, let me prove myself to you.

He simply looks at, points us to the cross and said, look what I have already done. I have already proven myself for you. I took your sins and I died for them.

And what I offer you in return is my perfect life, which I lived without sin, that I give to you. you see, the key to understanding Christmas begins with understanding your need for a Savior.

It's an understanding that that Savior is Jesus Christ and all you need to do is believe. I cannot tell you what will happen next, but a life with Jesus, our Emmanuel, is far better than a life lived like Ahaz.

[19 : 19] As Christians on this day, Christmas is a time of thanksgiving where we thank the Lord for sending his Son who lived 33 years, perfect, sinless life and died on a cross so that we may have life with him.

That is the Christmas story. Let me pray. dear Lord, Heavenly Father, I'm amazed at these stories in these Old Testament and these men who walked around you and knew you, had prophets speak to you and yet dug their heels in on their pride.

Even though they witnessed your workings, they knew what you had done for their forefathers, yet they continued and persisted in their rebellion against you. Father, maybe there is someone here who is doing the same thing.

They know you're real, they see the truth perhaps in their children, perhaps in their spouse, their friends, their neighbors, but yet they continue to still resist.

Even though they know what is true, they make up questions and problems that mystify them, but you're not mystified by these things, so Father.

[20 : 50] Jesus, we thank you that you are willing to humble yourself, and we give you thanks on these next two days as we celebrate today and tomorrow, as we come with family to think of the work that you did for us, that that was the day you invaded our world to save us from our prison of sin, from the death, destruction, and chaos we cause.

You don't need to be a leader of a country to cause hurt to people. You just need family and friends to do so. Father, even an Ahaz you were willing to make right with, you will do the same for us.

So my Lord, if anybody seeks after you, I pray that you would hear their plea and draw them to you in saving grace and faith.

In your most holy and precious name, Amen. Amen.