

*The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 30 December 2018. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.*

## **Emmanuel**

Over this past month, we have been learning about five different names for the Lord Jesus Christ; and we have been using the first letters of each of these names to spell the word “PEACE.”

First of all, we have seen that Jesus Christ is the **Prince of Peace**. Now, at this point in history, there is little peace on earth. In fact, Jesus *promised* His disciples that in this present age, Christians could expect not peace, but a *sword*. Why? Because for now, Christ is allowing Satan to walk up and down in the earth as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. For now, Christ is allowing sinful men to defy Him, and to fight against His Gospel of salvation, and against His people. However, Christ is in total control. He is moving human history in the direction that He has planned. One day Christ will return to earth; He will destroy the Antichrist and his armies at the Battle of Armageddon; and will set up His Kingdom of peace for 1,000 years. Christ will literally, physically sit on a throne in Jerusalem for 1,000 years; and the whole world will travel to Israel to worship Jesus Christ. It will be a wonderful, golden age!

However, this is not the only way in which Christ is the Prince of Peace. Every day, Christ is offering *peace with God* to sinners who are separated from Him. Our sin has separated every one of us from God; but Christ took the death penalty for our sins on the cross, so that if we will simply repent of our sin and trust in Him, and His sacrifice on our behalf, we may receive the gift of salvation. Those who believe on Christ are no longer His enemies: they are now made at peace with God.

Now, not only is Christ the Prince of Peace: He is also the **Everlasting Father**. The name “Everlasting Father” literally means “Father of eternity.” The idea behind this name is that Christ is the *Owner* of eternity—which means that He is in *control* of everything that happens in time and eternity. This truth brings great *peace* to the hearts of believers, because it reminds us that Christ is in control of our lives. Nothing happens to us that Christ has not allowed for His purpose. He is working all things together for our good.

Then, we saw that Christ is **Almighty God**. This truth brings great peace and comfort to every child of God, as well. Because Christ is almighty, He is mighty to save us (and keep us); He is mighty to deliver us from temptations; and He is mighty to provide for our needs, to protect us, and to give us strength.

Then, last week, we saw that Christ is our **Counsellor**. Because Christ is perfect in knowledge and wisdom, He is able to give you perfect counsel in every area of your life. In fact, the Bible says that Christ *is* Wisdom. Who could give you more perfect counsel than Jesus Christ can? He is your Creator. He knows everything about you. There is nothing that is hidden from Him. He knows about every sin struggle that you have; and through His Word, He is able to give you the counsel that you need (and the *strength* that you need) to overcome sin, and to live victoriously. When you are at your wit’s end, and don’t know what to do or where to turn, His Word can give light to your path.

Now, this morning, we will examine the last name of Jesus in our “PEACE” acronym. Among Jesus’ many wonderful names is the name **Emmanuel**. The title of this message is *Emmanuel*.

**Read Isaiah 7:1-14.**

## I. Jesus is “*God with us.*”

The Scripture that we just read was written by the prophet Isaiah, about 742 years before Christ was born. This prophecy was spoken at first; and shortly afterward, it was written down as Scripture.

Now, when Isaiah first delivered this prophecy, he was speaking to Ahaz, the king of Judah. God had sent Isaiah to King Ahaz to deliver an important message to him. You see, Ahaz was very troubled in mind. At that time, the national security of the kingdom of Judah, as well as Ahaz’s own life, were at stake. Because Ahaz worshipped idols, and refused to obey God, God had allowed Judah to be invaded by enemy nations on every side. Edom and Philistia had invaded from the south and the west, and had captured several of Judah’s cities; and King Pekah of Northern Israel, and King Rezin of Syria, had recently waged some devastating attacks from the north. As if this weren’t enough, these two kings were now making a confederacy together against Ahaz. At that very moment, the kings of Israel and Syria were preparing to make a joint invasion against Judah. They planned to kill Ahaz, and to place a puppet king on his throne, to be a political vassal to them. Furthermore, Ahaz wasn’t getting any help from the king of Assyria. Ahaz had recently made a political alliance with Tilgath-pilneser, the king of Assyria; and he had given him much gold and silver, and had made himself a vassal to Tilgath-pilneser. Basically, Ahaz had surrendered the national sovereignty of Judah in exchange for protection from Assyria. However, when the time came for Tilgath-pilneser to protect Judah from the kings of Syria and Northern Israel, he did nothing to help them. It looked as though Judah was soon going to be crushed by this invasion from Syria and Northern Israel, and that King Ahaz was going to lose his life.

Ahaz was in deep trouble; and it was all because of his rebellion against God. Yet, God was merciful to him. God had a message for Ahaz, and the message was simply this: God was going to intervene. God would protect Judah from her enemies. God would *not* allow Syria and Israel to destroy Judah. In fact, God told Ahaz that within “*threescore and five years*” (sixty-five years) Ephraim (the northern Kingdom of Israel) would, themselves, be completely destroyed by a foreign enemy, and would not be a nation anymore! (We know, from history, that Northern Israel was, indeed, destroyed by the empire of Assyria in 722 B.C.)

Now, in order to prove that God’s word on this matter was true, Isaiah offered Ahaz to ask Jehovah for a sign. Ahaz could ask God for any miracle whatsoever, whether in heaven or in earth. Sadly, though, Ahaz did not accept the offer. Unlike his ancestor David, Ahaz was not a believer in Jehovah. Even though Ahaz went through the outward motions of worshipping Jehovah, he also worshipped the false gods of the pagan nations around Israel. Ahaz was a lost man, who did not know God. That is why Ahaz refused to ask God for a sign. He turned down the opportunity to ask for a miraculous sign from God because he didn’t have any *faith*.

Now, Ahaz did have an excuse for declining the offer. His excuse was, “I don’t want to tempt God. I don’t want to be presumptuous.” On the surface, Ahaz’s answer may *sound* pious, because Scripture does command us not to tempt the LORD. However, *God Himself* had made this offer. Ahaz wouldn’t have been “tempting” the LORD by naming a sign; he would have simply been taking God at His Word. The reality is that Ahaz had no faith in God.

Now, what was Isaiah’s response? First of all, Isaiah said, “*Hear ye now, O house of David.*” Now, let’s hit the pause button for a second. Please notice that God did not address King

Ahaz directly: instead, God was speaking to *the house of David*. God was speaking to *all* David's descendants. It was not Ahaz, but the *house of David*, to whom God was speaking.

With this in mind, let's move on. Isaiah went on to say, "***Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?***" Basically, Isaiah was saying, "Come on, house of David! Give me a break! What kind of lame excuse is this: 'I don't want to tempt God'? Do you really think God is impressed with your fake humility?"

Ahaz's real problem was not that he was afraid to tempt God by asking for too much: his problem was that *he refused to believe God's Word!* Ahaz forfeited the opportunity of a lifetime because he refused to trust God! But guess what? God was determined to give the house of David a miraculous sign *in spite* of King Ahaz's unbelief. Basically, God said, "All right, family of David. Since *you* refuse to ask me for a sign, *I'm* going to give you a sign! *I* will choose the miracle to give you."

So, what was the miracle that God picked? Let's look again. (**Read verse 14.**) The sign that God chose to give to the house of David was a sign that *Ahaz himself* would never see. This miracle wouldn't happen until 742 years later. God did not give this promise to *Ahaz*, because he refused to believe God. However, this promise *was* given to the *family* of David as a whole. At some point in the future, some of the descendants of King David would have the privilege of seeing this miraculous sign take place. And what *was* the sign?

Well, this sign had two parts. First of all, Isaiah said that a *virgin* would have a son. *That* is a miracle! I don't think I need to point out that it is impossible for a virgin to have a child. With God, though, nothing is impossible. God promised that a woman would bear a child without having any intimate relationship with a man. However, this was only the first part of the miracle. The second part of the miracle was that this Son would be *God in flesh*. Isaiah said that this Son's name would be "Immanuel": and "Immanuel" means "**God** with us."

### **Read Matthew 1:18-23.**

Mary and Joseph were both descendants of King David; and as members of David's house, they were the *first ones* to see the fulfilment of this miracle which God had promised to the house of David 700 years earlier. They had the privilege of seeing *God* manifested in human flesh. They had the privilege of seeing Christ miraculously planted in Mary's womb, even though she had never had an intimate relationship with a man. They had the privilege of seeing this perfect, sinless child growing into a Man. Now, Joseph was dead by the time Jesus began His ministry at age 30: so he never saw Jesus' miracles. However, *Mary* had the privilege of seeing Jesus doing countless miracles. Jesus did these miracles by His own power and authority, and thus proved that He is God. Mary saw Jesus heal the deaf, the mute, the blind, the lame, the paralyzed, and people with all kinds of incurable illnesses. She had the privilege of seeing Jesus raise dead people to life again. Most of all, she had the privilege of seeing Jesus die on the cross to pay for our sins, and then *raise Himself back to life* three days later! Imagine what it would have been like to be Mary and Joseph (or one of the other members of the family of David), and to see the birth of Jesus *first-hand!*

Jesus truly is "**God** with us." As members of the house of David, Mary and Joseph both had "front row seats" to see this miracle unfold. However, the members of the family of David weren't the only ones to see it. The shepherds got to see it. Then, a couple years later, when

Jesus was about two years old, the wise men got to see this miraculous Child, as well; and they *also* understood that the infant Jesus was God in flesh.

### **Read Matthew 2:1-11.**

Did you notice what we read in **verse 11**? *Whom* did the wise men worship? Did they worship Mary, or Joseph? No! The only One they worshipped was Jesus. Now, the wise men were not Jews; but they did fear God, and they knew the Scriptures. It was *because of* their knowledge of the Scriptures that they had travelled to Israel to find Jesus! They knew that the unusual star in the sky was a sign of the Messiah's birth, as had been prophesied in **Numbers 24:17**. As students of Scripture, the wise men knew that only God is to be worshipped. Scripture says, "***Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.***" The fact that the wise men worshipped Jesus shows that they understood that Jesus, though a Man, was also God; and they did the right thing. They worshipped Him!

By the way, are *you* worshipping Jesus Christ? Should you be praying to, or adoring, anyone other than Jesus Christ (such as Mary, Joseph, St. Francis, St. Anthony, or anyone else), you are insulting and rejecting the Lord. Perhaps you even worship yourself!

I recently read the biography of a one-time Hindu named Rabi Maharaj, who turned from Hinduism to become a Christian. (In fact, his entire family of 13 people turned to Jesus Christ from Hinduism, burned their idols, and became vibrant witnesses for Jesus.) Now, Rabi was born into a Brahmin family (the highest caste of India); and he was set to become a Hindu priest. He did yoga for hours every day, and talked with demon spirits (which he thought were gods) all the time. Rabi was so convinced of the Hindu teaching that everyone is God, that he used to look into a mirror every day and *worship himself!*

After Rabi turned to Christ, he was deeply ashamed that he had once thought himself to be god, and that he had once allowed people to worship him. You know what, though? There are millions of people who worship themselves every day: and they're not even Hindus! Millions of people in *this* country worship themselves. Perhaps *you* are such a person. Now, you probably don't get out a mirror to worship yourself; and you probably don't *think* that you are worshipping yourself. However, if you have never repented of your sin, placed your complete faith in the sacrifice of Jesus for your sins, and thus made Christ *the Lord* of your life, then *you* are still usurping the throne of your life. Instead of giving Christ His rightful place on the throne of your heart, *you* are sitting there. You consider yourself to be your own master; and, ultimately, you live your life for your own glory, your own pleasure, your own goals, and your own profit, instead of for *God's* glory, *God's* pleasure, *God's* plan, and *God's* profit. If this be the case, you need to be saved! You need to repent of your sin and place your trust in what Jesus Christ did to save you from your sin!

## **II. Jesus is "God *with us*."**

We've seen that Jesus Christ is "*God with us*." Now we will focus on the second part of the name *Emmanuel*. Not only is Jesus God, but He is "*God with us*."

Since the beginning of human history, God's desire has been to dwell *with us*. Now, at the very beginning of human history, God *did* dwell with men. Christ, the second person of the Trinity, appeared in human likeness every day, and actually *walked and talked* with our

parents, Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden. There was nothing between them, because at that point, Adam and Eve were still sinless and perfect, the way God had created them. However, when they chose to disobey God's command, and to eat the forbidden fruit, they kicked God off the throne of their hearts; and they lost their relationship with God. God had to drive them from His presence in the Garden. They never physically walked or talked with Him anymore. Now, God did promise Adam and Eve that He would one day come into the human race, and would save them from their sin; and they were personally saved from the penalty of their sin by placing their faith in God's promise. In the mean time, though, God could no longer physically walk and talk with them, and be in their immediate presence.

However, 4,000 years later, God once again came down to dwell with us. Once again, God was *physically* in the presence of men! Thus time, He didn't merely assume human *form*, as He had done in the Garden of Eden: He actually *became a Man Himself!* He became an actual blood descendant of Adam! Jesus Christ, the second member of the Trinity, was born as a baby, lived as a Man, dwelt in human homes, and walked among men.

The name "Emmanuel" means that Jesus became a Man, and lived among men. However, there is more to it than that. The name "Emmanuel" speaks of having a *personal relationship* with Jesus. You see, when Jesus was on earth 2,000 years ago, He dwelt "with" both believers and unbelievers. He was *physically present* with men; but that didn't mean that all men believed on Him, and had a *relationship* with Him. **John 1:10** says that Christ was "***In the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.***" In fact, not only did the *world* not know Him: His *own people* didn't know Him. The next verse says, "***He came unto his own, and his own received him not.***" Most Jewish people did not receive their God.

### **Read Luke 13:22-29.**

These are sobering words! Jesus was warning the Jewish people that if they would *not* repent and believe on Him, there would come a day when they would find themselves cast outside the Kingdom of God, and in the torment of hell: and they would be *shocked* to find themselves there! They would say, "Lord, Lord, open up to us! We know you! You taught in our streets! We even sat down and ate our lunch while you were teaching us!" In other words, they will say, "You were *with us*, Lord! You walked through the streets of *our* towns! You stayed in *our* homes! You fed us with five loaves and two fishes. Doesn't that count for something?" Tragically, Jesus' answer to them will be: "Depart from me: I never knew you!"

You see, the fact that Jesus was *with us physically* isn't enough. The fact that Jesus came down to earth and dwelt among men isn't enough. Each man, woman, and child has a responsibility to repent and believe on Jesus Christ, and to receive the gift of salvation which He purchased with His blood on Calvary. The Jewish people who lived in Jesus' day had the privilege of being in Jesus' physical presence: but that didn't save them from their sin. Jesus was with them *physically*; yet, most of them rejected Him. They never surrendered the throne of their hearts to Him.

It was not enough for people in Jesus' day to be "with" Him in His physical presence. They needed to be *saved from their sin* by trusting in Him. The same is true for all of us. You and I must be *saved* in order to have the presence of Jesus Christ in our lives.

### **Read John 12:35-37.**

Look carefully at what Jesus said here. He said, “*While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.*” The Jewish people in Jesus’ day “had” the Light. (In other words, Jesus was “with” them bodily, in their presence.) However, that wasn’t enough. They had to *believe* on Him in order to become “children of light” (to be saved).

By the way, Jesus said these words very shortly before His crucifixion. Jesus was giving His disciples notice that very soon, He would no longer be physically present with them. Very soon, He would go away from them, and ascend back to His Father’s throne. However, on the night before His crucifixion, Christ promised them that after He had gone back to Heaven, He would send the Holy Spirit to dwell with them. In fact, Jesus promised that when the Spirit would come to dwell with them, He would no longer merely be *with* them: He would be *in* them. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would actually come to live inside their bodies!

**Read John 14:16-23.**

Fifty days after Christ’s resurrection (on the day of Pentecost), the Holy Spirit came to live inside believers, just as Jesus had promised. However, when the Holy Spirit came, *Christ and the Father* came to live inside believers, as well. (**Read verses 18 & 23 again.**) To this present hour, every soul that believes on Jesus is immediately sealed with the Spirit of God. God Himself—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—comes to live inside you. He doesn’t come and go, either: He *stays* with you. **Ephesians 1:13** says that the Spirit of God “seals” believers immediately after they believe on Jesus Christ; and He remains with them until the “*day of redemption,*” as proof that they are saved. The last thing that Jesus said before He ascended back to Heaven was, “*Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*”

Christian, do you realise what a privilege you have? The living God is “with you,” and “in you.” All three members of the Trinity indwell you. For now, Christ is not with you physically. As a *Man*, Jesus Christ is physically sitting on His throne in Heaven. However, His divine Spirit lives inside you; and some day, He *will* dwell with you physically. On the day of the Rapture, He will catch you up in the clouds, to meet Him in the air; and you will ever be with Him. At the end of the Tribulation, you will return with Him to earth. You will see Him on His throne in Jerusalem as He reigns for 1,000 years. Then, when the 1,000 years is finished, you will dwell with Him for *eternity* in the Heavenly Jerusalem! The fact that Christ will be with you until that eternal day should bring great *peace* to every Christian!

**Read Revelation 21:1-3.**

### **III. Jesus came to be “with us” at the perfect time.**

**Galatians 4:4-5** says, “*But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law.*” Jesus came at the exact right time in history. Not only that, but Jesus was born at the exact right time in the year. There is deep symbolic meaning in the time of year when Jesus was born. I *do* believe that Jesus was born in late December; and I can prove it scripturally.

**Read 1 Chronicles 24:5-10.**

According to this passage, King David divided the priests into 24 groups. Each group was from a different family of the tribe of Levi. These 24 Levite families took turns in their temple service. Each family would serve for two weeks in the Temple, and would then go back home. Now, please notice the name of the *eighth* family that served in the Temple. It was the family of *Abijah*. Let's see if we can find that name in the New Testament.

**Read Luke 1:5-14, 23-25, 34-36.**

Now, let's put all these chronologies together. First of all, we know that Zacharias was from the family of Abijah. This means that Abijah served his term in the Temple in August. How do I know? Because the Jewish religious year begins in *Nissan* (our month of April). If the first Levite family did its term of service in mid to late April, then Zacharias, who served in the eighth course, would have served in mid to late August. By the time Zacharias went back home, it would have been nearly September. This means that sometime in early September, his wife Elizabeth conceived. Then, sometime during Elizabeth's sixth month of pregnancy, Gabriel informed Mary that *she* would have a Son. This means that by the time Gabriel appeared to Mary, it was sometime in March. If it were the middle of March when Mary conceived, then nine months later, when Jesus was born, it would have been *December!*

It should not surprise us that Christ was born at this time of year. Christ was *conceived* during the time of Passover (in April) because He is *the Lamb of God*; and He was *born* at the time of the Jewish feast of *Hanukah*, in late December, because He is *the Light of the World*. The feast of Hanukah is called "The Feast of Lights"; and Jesus was, quite possibly, born during that week. Symbolically, it was the perfect time for Christ to be born! December is the darkest month of the year; and spiritually, Jesus was born into a world of great darkness. He came as the Light of the World, to open the eyes of those who walked in the darkness of sin.

Now, we could debate all day about exactly what time of year Jesus came to be "with us." Many godly believers do not agree that Jesus was born in December; and that is just fine. The *really* important question is this: "Has there been a time when Jesus came to dwell *with you?*" Has there been a time in your life when you were saved—when you opened the door of your heart, and asked Christ to come in, and to be *your* King and Lord? If not, what are you waiting for? Just as there was a perfect time for Christ to come into the world, there is a perfect time for Christ to come dwell in your heart: and that time is *now!* **Second Corinthians 6:2** says, "*Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*"

You may think that you won't be happy if you surrender control of your life to Christ. However, having known Christ for 35 years of my life, I can testify that there is no greater source of peace than in knowing Jesus Christ. He will replace your pitiful attempts at self-righteousness with His own *true* righteousness. He will replace your service to self (which always brings misery) with a life of joyful service to Him. He will replace your sin, which destroys your life, with salvation, righteousness, love, and peace.

**Conclusion:** We've come down to the end of our Christmas series. We've seen that Jesus is the Prince of Peace; the Everlasting Father; Almighty God; Counsellor; and Emmanuel. Each of these names tells us something about Christ, and something about the *peace* that can be ours when we have a relationship with Him. *Do you have* a relationship with Him? If not, I pray that you will come today in the invitation, and receive Him as Saviour. If you *do* know Christ as Saviour already, it is my prayer that you will draw closer to Him today, and that you will allow Him to have complete control over every area of your life.

