International Bible Lesson
International Bible Study Commentary
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God Is With Us
Matthew 1:18-25

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). (Matthew 1:22-23—ESV).

The LORD God has gone to remarkable means to show us that He loves us, cares for us, and is with us and for us. Look around at the beautiful world in which we live. Flawed, yes, and not as pristine as when the LORD created the world with His Word. Still, we cannot help but think and give thanks for the beauty of the heavens by day and night, the beauty of the trees and flowers, and the birds and butterflies. They point toward the LORD God who loves and cares so much for us that He wants us to enjoy the beauty of the earth that He created for us.

In the Bible, we read of people and prophets who experienced the Spirit of the Lord in a deeply personal way. Isaiah saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and heard the seraphim calling to one another "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" (Isaiah 6:3). David heard the LORD say to his Lord in Psalm 110:1, "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." In Matthew 22:44–45, Jesus explained that David was speaking about Him, the Messiah, when he called Him his Lord. Through these Old Testament servants, the LORD foretold the Messiah's future.

In the New Testament, we learn that John the Baptist would be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he was born and he would prepare people to meet Jesus (Luke 1:15–17). When Mary, the mother of Jesus, visited Elizabeth, John's mother, Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she said that the baby leaped in her womb (Luke 1:41). And Mary replied, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior" (Luke 1:46-47). God worked through all these people to assure us that He was with us and for us in a fallen world filled with enemies of His and ours. But God did even more than this for us after Jesus began His ministry. As followers of Jesus Christ, we become increasingly amazed at the works of God for us that reaffirm that God is with us.

The New Testament teaches that the Word of God, who created all things, was God, and He came in human flesh to be with us (John 1:1–18). The Word of God is Jesus. How did He do this? Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the virgin Mary conceived a son. He is Immanuel, which means "God with us" (Matthew 1:23). When Mary looked into the eyes of her newborn baby, she was looking into the eyes of God, and God was looking back lovingly into her eyes. Conceived by the Holy Spirit, Jesus was fully God and fully man. Everything He said and did revealed the love and care that God has for us.

Someone may ask, "But what has that to do with me?" Jesus can be with you and within you now and forever. He can be closer to you than He was to Mary and the disciples before He filled His followers with the Holy Spirit. When He filled them with the Holy Spirit, He came to live within them, not just with them. He came closer to them than when He washed His disciples' feet, because He began to live within them. If we truly follow Jesus Christ, Jesus lives within us, even as He lived within His first disciples. From within us, He helps us understand His teachings to them as recorded in the Bible, and He helps us apply His teachings in the ways we live for Him each day.

The apostle Paul wrote about this amazing fact in Colossians 1:25–29, teaching us that Christ in us is the hope of glory, "I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me." As Christian teachers, we teach the Bible so we may present everyone mature in Christ, and we do so with the strength that Jesus Christ in us gives us. Immanuel is not simply someone who came two thousand years ago to die for us and then returned to heaven, as though that were the end of the matter.

In John 1:12, we learn that those who receive Jesus and believe in His name are given the right to become children of God. God's children have God living within them. Through Christ at work within them, and through other believers helping them learn more about Him so they can love Him more, even as He loves them, believers grow toward maturity in Christ. Jesus' followers look forward to seeing Jesus face-to-face someday and to living with God and with all who love Him in a new heaven and earth forever and ever.

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