

BIBLE EMPOWERED TEACHING

Series: Jesus Christ The Son Of God Lesson 1

JESUS IS IMMANUEL

Knowing Jesus begins with knowing who He is and what He does for us. Once we know who He is, and what He is presently doing on our behalf, it is then that we are motivated in our hearts to conform to what He wills in our lives.

The Old Testament is our first “dictionary” to consult in order to understand who Jesus is. There are more than three hundred prophecies in the Old Testament in reference to the Messiah and the events that would surround His gospel invasion into the world and ascension to the throne of God. Of all the prophecies that are made in the Old Testament, there are some key prophecies that we must not only understand, but they must be the motivation for changing our lives to conform to who He is. One of these key prophecies is Isaiah 7:14. In this prophecy, Isaiah prophesied of the birth of One who would be a sign to Israel:

Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, a virgin will conceive and bear a son, and she will call his name Immanuel (See Is 8:8-10).

Matthew quoted this prophecy in reference to the birth of Jesus (Mt 1:23). Though there may be some immediate historical applications of Isaiah’s prophecy in reference to times and events of his lifetime, Matthew’s quotation of the prophecy in reference to Jesus leaves no doubt that Isaiah had the Messiah in mind when the original prophecy was made.

This prophecy became one of the prophecies of the Old Testament upon which the Jews based their expectations concerning the One who would come to redeem Israel. Many Jews, unfortunately, thought that the Messiah would be a military leader who would redeem the nation of Israel out of the hands of their oppressors, as Moses did in his day. Even to the last hours of Jesus’ ministry, and prior to His ascension, some of His closest disciples maintained this expectation (At 1:6). However, when Jesus as the Messiah initially began His ministry, He sought to instruct the people out of these misunderstandings in order that He be the sign that God was with His people. Only when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost did the disciples fully understand that Jesus was the Immanuel of God (See Jn 14:26; 16:13). There would be no national restoration of Israel. There would be only times of spiritual refreshing from the presence of the Lord (At 3:19).

Isaiah went on in the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 to describe the ministry of the Immanuel of God and what He would be in His relationship with the people of God:

For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given. And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Is 9:6).

Though there are many names in the Bible that define the incarnate Son of God and His ministry, the reference “Immanuel” defines His unique relationship with the people. Other references to the Messiah emphasize the function of Jesus on earth, as well as in heaven at this time. But the Son of God as Immanuel was a sign that God was on earth with His people. If we are allowed to use the name “Immanuel” in the manner of an acrostic (using each letter to stand for a truth), then we would come up with the following suggested identity and function of Jesus as the sign, or ministry, of God with His people:

Image
Man
Messiah
Advocate
Name
Understanding
Example
Light

A. Image:

Jesus as the Immanuel was the revelation of God in the spirit who revealed to us in the flesh the God from whom He came.

When Paul stood before idolaters in Athens, he explained that “*we are the offspring of God*” (At 17:29). However, being the offspring of God did not mean that “*The Divine Nature is like unto gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man*” (At 17:29). On the contrary, if we would imagine God to be as we are in the flesh, then we would be idolaters. If one would create an image in his mind that God is as the physical image of man, then Paul would say to this idolater, “*And the times of this ignorance God has overlooked, but now He commands all men everywhere to repent*” (At 17:30).

One must repent of his childish ignorance of imagining God to be in the physical image of man. Those who would change “*the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man,*” are doing what Paul later explained, “*Professing to be wise, they became fools*” (Rm 1:22,23). It is important to put away from our minds imaginations that materialize God the Father who is spirit (Jn 4:24). We must repent of this thinking, because the more we conceive in our minds that God in heaven is physical, the less we understand the incarnational revelation of God through Jesus in the flesh.

We must not reverse the incarnation of God by creating a god in our minds after our own physical image. It was God in the spirit (Jn 4:24) who incarnated into the flesh of man in order to reveal who He is (Jn 1:14). If the Son of God were

already in the flesh before the incarnation, as some envision Him to have been, **then there would have been no incarnation.** Such imagery is a denial of the gospel. It is idolatry.

Isaiah explained that the Immanuel would be an indication of “God with us” (Is 8:10). In order for God in the spirit to be with man in the flesh, there had to be an incarnation. During His ministry, Jesus proclaimed, “*He who has seen Me has seen the Father*” (Jn 14:9). The meaning of this statement is as Jesus explained, “*I and My Father are one*” (Jn 10:30). Of course the Father was not in the physical image of Jesus after the incarnation, and at the time Jesus made these statements. Paul wrote later that Jesus “*is the image of God*” (2 Co 4:4). If the physical image of Jesus during His earthly ministry supposedly identified God the Father in the same physical image when Jesus walked on this earth, **then the transformation of the Son of God through incarnation would be denied.**

The core of God’s work to be with His people through the gospel began with the incarnation. John explained, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*” (Jn 1:1,2). John then emphatically stated, “*And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us*” (Jn 1:14). Since the Word was with God in spirit in eternity, He was made through incarnation into the flesh of man while on earth. The Immanuel of God would be God with us in the flesh, and thus, Jesus as Immanuel, was the revelation of the spiritual image of God who indwelt Jesus in the flesh. Jesus, as the Immanuel of God was a spiritual expression of God in order that we, through Jesus, relate to God in the Spirit. The incarnation, therefore, was God reaching out to us through Jesus in order that we have a salvational relationship with Him. In this way, God was with us during the earthly ministry of Jesus.

B. Man:

Jesus as the Immanuel was the incarnation of God who seeks to have a relationship with man.

In order for God to relate with us, God the Son of necessity had to give up being in the spirit form of God in order to be made in the likeness of those with whom He would establish an eternal relationship (Ph 2:6,7). God the Son in the spirit (Jn 4:24), thus became God in the flesh in order to dwell among us (Jn 1:14). So in the beginning before all was created, the Word (Immanuel) was with God, “*and the Word was God*” (Jn 1:1). But after the incarnation, and when the early disciples were with Jesus, they experienced through Jesus the person of God.

It was in the spiritual image of God that God dwelt among men in the flesh of Jesus. The Son of God was “*made in the likeness of men*” (Ph 2:7). His body was the vehicle by which God moved among men. While incarnate in the flesh of a man, He could be tempted with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (See Mt 4:1-17; 1 Jn 2:16). He was moved with compassion (Mt 14:14). He felt the frustration of being rejected by the Jews to whom He had come with a message of redemption from law (Jn 1:11; see Is 53). He was one who could be exceedingly sorrowful for the condition of mankind (Mt 9:36; 23:37; Mk 8:2).

As the Immanuel, Jesus was not only made in the physi-

cal body of man, but also made after the emotional psychology of men. He could feel as we feel, and thus have sympathy for our predicament in the flesh. His response to life in the company of people revealed how God identified with humanity. In order that God truly be with His people, He had to come in the totality of who man is, but at the same time, and in some way, not give up His deity. He emptied Himself of the spirit form of God in order to be made in the physical form of man.

C. Messiah:

Jesus as the Immanuel was the fulfillment of all prophecies that were related to the coming of the One who would spiritually lead Israel as Moses led God’s people physically from Egyptian bondage.

The Messiah was the One many Jews anticipated to be the coming redeemer of Israel. The Greek word that is used in reference to the Messiah is the word “Christ.”

For centuries, the Jews were waiting for the fulfillment of the promised Deliverer who would be like unto Moses (See Dt 18:15-18). For many, the anticipation for His coming came to a peak during the events surrounding the birth of Jesus. At the time, Israel was under the oppression of the Roman Empire. But King Herod—Rome’s appointed King of the Jews—was fearful of this coming King. He knew the prophecies of the Messiah and believed that the Messianic King had been born in Bethlehem. He subsequently killed all the children two years of age and under in order to eliminate any assumed competition for the power of his sons who would succeed him (Mt 2:16-18).

Rumors concerning the events of the birth of Jesus spread throughout Palestine. And then about thirty years after the birth of Jesus, came the ministry of John the Baptist. At the time of John’s ministry, the anticipation for the Messiah was so great that some assumed that even John could be the Messiah. But John answered their confusion, “*I am not the Christ [Messiah]*” (Jn 1:20). John explained, “*I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as the prophet Isaiah said*” (Jn 1:23).

Then there were those disciples who were so anxious for the coming of the Messiah that upon the basis of the initial proclamations of Jesus as the Messiah, they willingly believed that Jesus was the One. Philip was one of those anxious individuals. After briefly encountering Jesus, Philip ran to his brother, Simon (Peter), and said, “*We have found the Messiah*” (Jn 1:41). The proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah touched the hearts of the initial disciples of Jesus. They believed on the basis of John’s simple proclamation that Jesus was the Messiah (See Jn 1:43-51).

And indeed Jesus was the Messiah who had come. When Jesus was with a Samaritan woman, even she revealed the expectation of the Samaritans concerning the coming of the Messiah. She said to Jesus, “*I know that Messiah is coming (who is called Christ). When He comes, He will tell us all things*” (Jn 4:25). Jesus answered, “*I who speak to You am He*” (Jn 4:26).

As the Jews looked for and expected the coming of the Messiah, with the same expectation we too look for His coming again at the end of time. Immediately after His ascen-

sion, two angels stood by the disciples and promised, “*This same Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven will come in like manner as you have watched Him go into heaven*” (At 1:11). Therefore, “*we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells*” (2 Pt 3:13).

D. Advocate:

Jesus as the Immanuel was the revelation of God who seeks to work continually on our behalf in reference to our problem of sin.

It may be that we view lawyers with some distaste, but when we speak of Jesus as our lawyer, we want to give Him a hug. Jesus is the lawyer (advocate) who pleads for our case. He not only pled our case on the cross that we be justified of all our crimes (sins) against God, He also took those sins upon Himself that we be judged righteous before God (1 Pt 2:24). John reminds all Christians, “*My little children, these things I write to you so that you do not sin. And if anyone sins, we have a Counselor [advocate] with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*” (1 Jn 2:1).

Jesus continually acts on the behalf of those who have given themselves to Him through obedience to the gospel. His function as our advocate was activated at the cross. “*Therefore, He is able also to save those to the uttermost who come to God through Him, seeing He always lives to make intercession for them*” (Hb 7:25). The Hebrew writer reminds us that our Advocate appears “*in the presence of God for us*” (Hb 9:24). The emphasis of this statement is not to make God seem distant from us. On the contrary, the Hebrew writer wanted to metaphorically associate the Father and our Advocate in close contact with one another on our behalf. In other words, “*We have such a high priest who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens*” (Hb 8:1).

We must never forget, therefore, what Paul reminded Timothy: “*For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*” (1 Tm 2:5). It is this Christ (Messiah) “*who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us*” (Rm 8:34).

E. Name:

Jesus as the Immanuel was the revelation of God with us who now has all authority in heaven and on earth.

The appeal of the gospel to all people was stated by Paul in Philippians 2: “*Therefore, God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow*” (Ph 2:9,10).

The word “name” refers to authority. It is in this time of history that all authority has been given unto Jesus who reigns over all things (Mt 28:18; Ph 2:9-11). The Father raised up Jesus to be “*far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named*” (Ep 1:21). Therefore, “*there is salvation in no other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved*” (At 4:12). And for this reason, everyone in this dispensation of time who would be saved, must obey the gospel in the name of Jesus (At 2:38).

All baptized believers now live under the influence of the gospel because of their obedience to the word of Christ (Jn 12:48). Paul therefore exhorted, “*And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*” (Cl 3:17). Paul also reminded the Philippians, “*Only let your behavior be worthy of the gospel of Christ [the Messiah]*” (Ph 1:27). In living the gospel, Christians must strive “*together for the faith of the gospel*” (Ph 1:27). In doing this, they are living according to the name (authority) of Jesus.

F. Understanding:

Jesus as the Immanuel was the revelation of the heart of God in order to draw all men unto the gospel.

Following the third century, one of the great theological misunderstandings concerning the function of Jesus was that He ascended so far away from the Christian that another intermediary was necessary in order to make contact with Him. Misguided theologians subsequently made Mary, the mother of Jesus, the new intercessor on behalf of the saints. Some recent exaltations of Mary are “*that the Virgin [Mary] intercedes for us in heaven and that her intercession is so universal that every grace passes through her hands*” (Paul H. Hallet, *What is a Catholic*, p. 77). Since Mary is supposed to intercede on behalf of the saints, we “*may also pray to the Blessed Virgin ...*” (William J. Cogan, *A Catechism for Adults*, p 16).

But the preceding is not what is taught concerning the relationship that Jesus now has with His people. The preceding teaching was indirectly making its way into the thinking of the disciples even by the time the book of Hebrews was written. The substitute for Jesus was not Mary. Some Christians, however, were reverting to the intermediary function of the Levitical priesthood. For this reason, the Hebrew writer made the following reassuring statement concerning the relationship that Jesus, as “*God with us,*” was with all His disciples: “*For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all things tempted as we are, yet without sin*” (Hb 4:15).

Because we personally have a high priest who shows empathy toward us, the Hebrew writer wanted to embolden us to approach unto the throne of grace directly through Jesus: “*Therefore, let us come boldly to the throne of grace, so that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need*” (Hb 4:16). We have direct access to Jesus because He partook of the same environment of temptation in which we live. He was “*tempted as we are,*” and thus, He understands our predicament in this world. Add to this the encouragement of Paul, “*For through Him [Jesus] we both have access by one Spirit to the Father*” (Ep 2:18).

On earth, Jesus was personally with His disciples in order that God have a personal relationship with His people. Because He personally in the body ascended out of their presence (At 1:11), this does not mean that He discontinued His relationship with His disciples. He is not personally with us at this time in bodily form, but we are assured that He will be personally with us in bodily form when He comes again (At 1:11; 1 Jn 3:2). It is for the restoration of his personal relationship that we yearn.

The prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 was that the Immanuel (“*God with us*”) would be comforting to those who accepted

Him as the Savior of the world. Any theology that would teach that Jesus is distant from us is an attack against the very purpose for which God intended the incarnational Son of God would be in His relationship with us. When Jesus ascended to the right hand of God, He went away bodily, but not in presence spiritually. He only assumed another function of being that would draw us closer to the Father by drawing us closer to Him. He understands our predicament of life because He continually relates to our suffering, though He is not personally with us at this time as He was with the early disciples.

G. Example:

Jesus as the Immanuel revealed to the people of God a relational behavior by which we can live in response to the gospel.

Though the Jews had a nationalistic concept concerning the coming of the Messiah, there was still the need for the incarnation. They erroneously believed that the Messiah would come in order to deliver them from their oppressors. But they had a limited concept concerning the origin and purpose of this Messiah. According to their beliefs, the Messiah would simply be a man born of a woman who would rise to prominence among the Jews just as Moses. Their understanding that this Messiah would actually be an incarnation of God was not in their thinking. It was a mystery that was kept from the minds of men until He was revealed and experience (Ep 3:3-5; 1 Pt 1:10-12).

When Jesus said, *“He who has seen Me has seen the Father,”* God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit knew that we needed a living example to usher us through this world. We needed more than a good religious leader who was born to a carpenter of Nazareth, and then would pronounce theological dictates to the people. We needed an incarnate God who would give us the purest form of discipleship that would be the model for all men. Therefore, Jesus’ statement of John 13:15 reveals the example of what gospel living demands: *“For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you.”*

When Jesus made this statement, He, as the incarnate Son of God, had just washed the feet of the disciples. These were the same disciples who considered Him to be their Lord and Teacher (Jn 13:13). So Jesus said to them, *“If I then, the Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to*

wash one another’s feet” (Jn 13:14). We are now at the table as invited guests, and it is Jesus the Messiah who led by giving us examples of service (See Mk 10:44,45; Lk 22:27). As His disciples, we must do likewise.

Jesus’ washing of the feet of the disciples in the John 13 context, therefore, is quite incomprehensible. He was the Creator of the dirty feet He washed (Cl 1:16). And yet, He as the Creator was on His knees washing the feet of man. This example of servanthood surpasses any example that man could possibly give for others to follow. If God can wash our dirty feet, then we have no excuse whatsoever not to serve others as He served us.

H. Light:

Jesus as the Immanuel revealed the way out of the darkness of this world into the light of the realm of God’s existence.

Jesus proclaimed to the multitudes, *“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life”* (Jn 8:12). These words were John’s quotation of what Jesus affirmed during His earthly ministry. But the Holy Spirit was not finished with this concept about who the Son of God was among us. Concerning His last revelation of Jesus as the light, the Holy Spirit inspired John to write, *“But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another”* (1 Jn 1:7). *“God is light and in Him is no darkness at all”* (1 Jn 1:5). The light is where all of us want to be. We seek to escape from the darkness of this world in order to walk in the eternal light of God. It was for this reason that Jesus brought the eternal light of God into this world. We follow Him as the light, therefore, in order to be led out of darkness into the eternal realm of light in the presence of God.

For those Jews of faith in the first century, the Messiah was more than what they had hoped. Not long into Jesus’ ministry, many people of faith soon discovered that *“in Him was life, and the life was the light of men”* (Jn 1:4). Jesus had come into a world of darkness, but *“the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not understand it”* (Jn 1:5). Because God is light, anyone who would come from the presence of God must of necessity bring with Him light (1 Jn 1:5-7). And since Jesus came from God, He came as a bearer of light for all who live in the darkness of the world.