

Emmanuel – God With Us

We sing all the songs at Christmas time about Christ coming to earth as God in the flesh. We feel the presence of the Lord strongly at those times. But yet, do we believe that Christ is still Emmanuel? Do we live like He is still present with us? Or are we just on our own to slug it out in this life until we can see Him again when we die, or He returns to the earth again?

When Christ ascended to heaven 40 days after His resurrection, was that it? Now we are just like the people were before He came to earth? We can pray to receive salvation from our sins, which assures us a reservation in heaven after we die, but otherwise, we are no better off than those who lived before the Incarnation. All we can do is hope for a future in Glory, where all our troubles are forgotten, and our tears are dried. So I guess all we can do is just sit around hoping to die or be raptured, because life is hard and the only good we will ever see is in the future with God. In the meantime, while we are looking up and trying to get through this life, we just have to pull up our bootstraps and force ourselves by our own self-will to say and do the “right” things. This is very hard. We must fight this terrible fight every single day. It starts the second we wake up and doesn’t let up until we lay down to sleep again at night. We rarely succeed at this, so we are always discouraged, frustrated, and depressed. This leads to problems with other people, both those we are close to and those we interact with who are strangers to us. It makes us feel guilty to enjoy pleasures of any kind in this life because that feels sinful. If we are enjoying this life while others are doomed to hell, how horrible is that? Yet, what do we have to offer to those who “don’t know the Lord”? They can become as discouraged, frustrated, and depressed as us, but with a future hope they can’t have until they die. Well, they already have discouragement, frustration, anger, bitterness, and depression. The future hope sounds like a daydream, so why do they want to be like us?

I think most of us would argue that we don’t agree with the above paragraph. Yet, I feel many live like they do in reality. Maybe instead of putting so much emphasis on “future glory” or even being with loved ones again someday who have passed on before us, we should believe the Truth as recorded in the Bible. The very words of Jesus Himself.

Listen to the words of Jesus as He prepares his disciples for his coming death, resurrection, and physical departure from the earth:

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. You heard that I said to you, “I go away, and I will come to you.” If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. – John 14:26-28

But now I am going to Him who sent me; and none of you asks me, “Where are You going?” But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. John 16:5-7

Behold an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.

These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.” John 16:32-33

Of course, we look with eagerness to the day when we can be physically with the Lord, but He did not leave us alone here on the earth in the meantime. He is truly Emmanuel. He is God with us, all the time, every hour of every day. If this were not so, why are not all people instantly raptured upon profession of salvation? Look at Jesus’ words above. He was assuring us of peace, freedom from fear. I can’t quote the entire Bible here but encourage you to look at all the verses that include joy, peace, and being satisfied with the abundance of blessing in your life.

Jesus assured us that He has overcome the world. That means that in spite of the tribulations we most certainly will endure, we can rejoice. Not just some kind of spiritual “joy” that doesn’t include happiness or enjoyment. We can actually enjoy life, the beauty of God’s creation, the love of those God has put into our lives and even the professions God has made for us to take. God made each of us to be a unique individual. No two people are alike, even identical twins. Into each of us, God has placed gifts, talents, and callings which the Bible tells us are irrevocable. That means that you were created specially to fill a place in God’s plan that He had all worked out before you were ever born. The abilities to do that and the gifts were placed in you specially for that purpose. All you have to do is “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you”. All you have to do is walk in obedience to God’s word and He will direct your path. He will show you where to go to learn more about the skills needed for the job He created you to perform. He will lead you to the people and places where He wants you to go to fill your place in His plan.

Maybe if we find ourselves feeling like a square peg in a round hole, trying to make ourselves fit into something we think we are “supposed” to do, we need to step back and see if that is what God created us for? God in His infinite wisdom does not make mistakes. All the pieces of the puzzle fit perfectly when we listen to the Master Builder. If we are trying to make ourselves fit in a place we were not designed for, we are working outside of the perfect plan. Don’t worry, you won’t lose your salvation over that. But you also won’t be blessed. You will work and fret and try so hard to make things work. You may squeeze out a little bit of small fruit, but it won’t be abundant or of best quality.

For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot says, “because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body,” it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear says, “because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body, “ it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. If they were all one member, where would the body be? But now there are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; or again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, so that there may be no division in the body, but that members may have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are Christ’s body, and individually members of it. – 1 Corinthians 12:14-27

This passage addresses the need for all members to not only recognize their own part, but the parts others play in the body and work together under the Head, which is Christ. Along with understanding that not everyone can be one body part, we also need to understand that one body part cannot effectively function in another body part's role. A foot can try to do the role of a hand, and even partially succeed, but it surely will not do as good a job as a hand, or as good a job as it would do as a foot. God has made us specially fitted for our role in the body. We need to seek His wisdom to fill the part of the body He created us for, not to try to force ourselves into a role that seems more appealing or someone else feels we "should" do.

God is indeed with us. Emmanuel. Christ physically left the earth so the Helper, the Holy Spirit could come and guide us into all righteousness. We are not left on our own to slug it out and try to make things work the best we can until we die or Jesus returns. We don't have to battle daily to live a holy life. We can rest in the finished work of the Cross. We trust in the Lord with all our hearts, lean not on our own understanding, acknowledge Him in all our ways, and He makes our paths straight. Then when we come to a crossroads in the path, and are not sure what to do:

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. – James 1:5-8

Double minded men are those who are wrestling with doing it their way and not fully trusting their path to God. That is why they will not receive anything from the Lord. Only when we fully submit and commit to letting God take the lead, and being willing to follow Him wherever He leads, will we live in the freedom, peace, true joy, and happiness we were created to enjoy. Then we can rest in the assurance of God With Us. Emmanuel. Now and forevermore. Amen.