

Introduction: As I finished my seminary training and prepared to be pastor (or under-shepherd) in a local church, my main concern was how I could minister to people in extremely difficult life situations. God does not heal all people who are ill. Many people die young. God does not always help people in financial difficulty. Some end up homeless and/or hungry. Jesus said to His disciples who were angry at the woman who anointed Him with expensive oil because she did not sell it and give the proceeds to the poor, 'You always have the poor with you' (*Matthew 26:6-13*). This is not a matter of faith. Jesus also said, 'In this world you all are experiencing tribulation' (*John 16:33*). By this He meant that in local church families there will always be at least one faithfully obedient member experiencing trials. As a result, all the members of the local Body of Christ suffer (*1 Corinthians 12:21-26*). So I knew there was no word of God I could give to a person in dire straits that his or her situation would get better. *** So I sought God in prayer for anything I could use to encourage suffering people that is for all of God's faithful people, all the time. Eventually I realized there IS one such word: God will always be with His people – all the time in every circumstance. This is the Emmanuel ('with us God') promise that is everywhere from *Genesis* to *Revelation*. *** In last week's *Life of Christ* Bible study, we saw Jesus said His people need to be more shrewd in dealing with what is happening in their own times, which are always changing (*Luke 16:1-17*). So I decided, in the eyes of the world, believers could say the Emmanuel promise is the one 'blank check' that God gives His people that can be 'cashed' at any time in any circumstance. *** The account of what the angel of The Lord said to Joseph about how his espoused wife came to be with child according to the word through the prophet (Isaiah): 'They shall call His Name Emmanuel ('with us The God')' is one of many passages stating this always true word. And, the very heart of David's Shepherd Psalm is, 'Because Thou (are) with me' *** Let's now explore the Emmanuel word in these two contexts.

I. Joseph discovers Mary is with child by The Holy Spirit to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet about a virgin and Emmanuel: The Savior. (*Matthew 1:18-25*)

A. After being espoused to Mary and before coming together, Joseph discovered she was with child; and, the angel of The Lord says take her because the child is conceived by The Holy Spirit to save. (*Verses 18-21*)

1. The birth of Jesus Christ was being thus: (*Verse 18a*)

2. His mother Mary, having been espoused to Joseph, before they came together, was found being with child from The Holy Spirit. (*Verses 18b-c*)

Binding betrothal: In those days espousal was a binding marriage covenant and could last a year.

With child before consummation: Joseph had not had marital relations with her but she was with child.

3. But her husband Joseph being just (righteous), and not willing to disgrace her, was minded to secretly put her away. (*Verse 19*)

Joseph is just: Joseph knew adultery was wrong, justifying a divorce (putting away).

Secretly end marriage: The punishment for adultery was stoning to death, so he decided to protect her by not exposing her to death.

4. Having thought of these things, Behold! angel of The Lord appeared to him in a dream. (*Verses 20a-b*)

Having thought: He gave prayerful thought to what he would do, he wanted to be sure he was right.

Behold! Angel of Lord: Then suddenly, he was shocked by an angel coming in a dream. God speaks to Joseph five times in dreams (also *2:12, 13, 19, 22*).

5. Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife ... (*Verse 20c*)

Son of David: take Mary: Joseph is in the line into which Messiah would be born (*2 Samuel 7:8-13*) and through His angel God commands him to take Mary to be his wife.

6. ... because the one conceived in her is from The Holy Spirit. (*Verse 20d*)

Because of The Holy Spirit: She has not been un-faithful with a man, the son is conceived by God.

7. She will bring forth a son and you will call his name Jesus. (*Verse 21a*)

Call her son Jesus: In Hebrew his name is *Y^o-shoo-a^{gh}*, coming to Greek as *Yay-soos'*, meaning to save.

8. Because he will save his people from their sins. (*Verse 21b*)

Save His people from sins: People are estranged from God by sin. To be saved from sins is to be reconciled to God.

B. This happened in order to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: A virgin shall give birth to a son called Emmanuel; and, he called her son Jesus. (*Verses 22-25*)

1. This all had happened that it would be fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet. (*Verse 22*)

Prophecy fulfilled: What God speaks through His prophets is always fulfilled in His time.

2. Behold! The virgin will be having a child and will give birth to a son. (*Verse 23a*)

Virgin give birth to son: This clearly states Jesus was conceived in and born of a virgin.

3. They will call his name Emmanuel, which is being interpreted 'with us, The God'. (*Verses 23b-c*)

Call him 'with us God': Writing to the Greek speaking Jews, Matthew interprets the Hebrew. He declares this son born of God AND Mary will be THE God with human beings. Before he interpreted the Greek, Matthew directly quoted the Greek translation of *Isaiah* (*7:14*).

God's LOVE is shown through Immanuel (God with us)

4. Having been aroused from sleep, Joseph did as the angel of The Lord commanded him. (*Verse 24*)

Immediate obedience: Just as with Abraham, Joseph always immediately obeyed God's commands.

5. And he was not knowing her, until which her son was born, and he called his name Jesus. (*Verse 25*)

Know: This knowing is in an experiential physical sense, meaning intimate physical relation.

Jesus: Here Joseph named him Jesus (Savior) according to the revelation from the angel of The Lord.

Jesus is born of God and a woman

II. Yahweh leads His sheep to rest, restoration and righteousness; and, is with them near death, comforting, feeding, anointing and loving for long days. (*Psalms 23*)

A. Yahweh is a personal shepherd who leads His sheep to waters of rest to restore his soul and guide in righteousness. (*Verses 1-3*)

1. Yahweh is being my Shepherd, I will not be lacking. (*Verse 1*)

Shepherd: Sheep are prone to ignorance and wandering, just as people; but, Yahweh cares for them and looks after them as a shepherd.

No lack: Because of this, His sheep lack nothing (*Deuteronomy 8:7-9*). They will never be without.

2. He will cause me to lie down in green pastures, He will lead me beside waters of rest, He will restore my soul. (*Verses 2-3a*)

Food: Yahweh will feed His flock as a shepherd of them.

Rest: 'Waters of rest' is alliterative, '*mai m^e-noo-akh*', with the root of rest being that of Noah's name.

Restoration: And David's soul will be as a sheep brought back to close relationship with his shepherd.

3. He will lead me in paths of righteousness for the sake of His Name. (*Verses 3b-c*)

Righteousness: Righteousness is one of Yahweh's greatest character traits. It is characteristic of being righteous, as Joseph was.

Yahweh's sake: A sheep of Yahweh The Shepherd walking in righteousness reflects well on Him.

B. Even near death, the sheep does not fear for The Shepherd is with him, comforting him with discipline and salvation. (*Verse 4*)

1. Even when I will walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will not fear evil. (*Verses 4a-c*)

No fear at death: He will have no fear of approaching death, seeing it as a 'shadow'.

2. Because You (are) with me. (*Verse 4d*)

Exact middle: There are twenty one lines of poetry in this song-psalm. This is the eleventh, the exact middle.

As such, the whole song builds up to this truth, and then flows from this truth.

Emmanuel truth: It is the Emmanuel truth in poetry, as well as gospel. God is always with His people.

Key reality: Even in the darkest hour of the 'shadow of death' God is with His people BECAUSE His people will enter

His presence forever when they physically die, in order to experience new life in Him, The Good Shepherd (*John 10:1-18*).

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3. Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me. (*Verses 4e-f*)

Discipline and salvation: The rod was for discipline when a sheep wandered away by his own volition; and, the staff was used to save a sheep from a ditch with thorns into which he inadvertently fell.

C. The shepherd feeds him before his enemies, and anoints him to overflowing, pursuing him in goodness and LOVE for long days. (*Verses 5-6*)

1. You will prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. (*Verses 5a-b*)

Feed before enemies: Just as David delivered his sheep from a lion and bear with Yahweh's help (*1 Samuel 17:34-37*), so he is now confident his Shepherd Yahweh will feed him while protecting him from enemies seeking to destroy him.

2. You will anoint my head with oil, my cup runs over (overflows). (*Verses 5c-d*)

Overflowing anointing: Yahweh will anoint David with the oil of His Spirit until he can't contain it.

3. Surely goodness and steadfast LOVE will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will return to the 'house' (family) of Yahweh to long days. (*Verse 6*)

Pursue: David had been pursued by Saul to be killed (*1 Samuel 24:14; 26:18*), and by his son Absalom (*2 Samuel 17-20*).

But now reflecting back on his relationship with his Shepherd, he sees he was always pursued by His goodness and His strong, life-giving, life-changing LOVE.

Long return: Therefore he has confidence he will return to Yahweh and His family flock for long days.

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Conclusion: When Joseph thought Mary had been un-faithful to him, an angel of The Lord said she had conceived by The Holy Spirit to fulfill the word spoken through the prophet about a virgin giving birth to Emmanuel (with us, The God), The Savior from sin. And, Yahweh leads His sheep to rest, restoration and righteousness because His is with them in death, comforting, feeding, anointing and loving them.

God's LOVE is shown through Immanuel (God with us)