

What's in a Name?

Matthew 1:18-25

Introduction

If I said the name *Elvis*, who comes to mind? Was it the Michigan quarterback of the early 90s, Elvis Grbic? Or maybe the English pop singer/songwriter Elvis Costello? There have been others named *Elvis* in history, but when you hear the one name, you think of Elvis Presley. He's also known as the *King of Rock and Roll*, or even just *The King*. Some call him *Old Swivel-hips*. Mary's Son, the **Son of God** is known by many names. *Isaiah* says, *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace* (*Isaiah 9:6*). Each one of these names tells us something about Him. Today, we read two names He was called, **Immanuel** and **Jesus**.

Immanuel—God with Us

If this seems familiar to you, this passage in **Matthew** was the Gospel lesson for Sunday. I talked about how God shows His love to us by being **Immanuel**, *God with Us*. It says something that we can have the same Gospel lesson for two services so close together. There is a wealth of information here. Even though I'm preaching on the same part of the reading, there's more to say.

Who Is He?

Who is the God who is with us? He is the One formerly known as the *God who has no name*, *God Almighty*, *Adonai* (Lord), *The Great I Am*, among others. He is the *Holy One of Israel*. He has come to reveal Himself to us. Before, He told His people they could not make an image of Him. Now, not just an image, He comes to us **Himself**. He has revealed Himself in many ways. He speaks through **history**. That's what the genealogies are all about. He speaks through **dreams** (5 times in the first 2 chapters of **Matthew**). He speaks through **angels** (to Zechariah, Mary, 3 times to Joseph and a whole host appear to the shepherds). He speaks through **Scripture**. Now, He reveals Himself through **Immanuel**, *God with Us*. He has come to us **in person**.

One of Us

But, He's not just some stranger visiting us. He has **become one of us**. This is the mystery of the **Incarnation**. The Creator has chosen to join with His creation and share life as a creature. He shares in our joys and sorrows, sickness and health, good times and bad. God isn't just among us, He's **with** us, sharing life as one of us.

What this Means

This is a slap in the face to pluralism, which says that *we all get to God in our own way*. Pluralism says that we all worship the same god but call him by different names. This doesn't mean the different biblical names for the Christian God. This teaching means that **Allah** is the same as **Buddha** is the same as **Yahweh** is the same as **Ra** or **Baal**. God came down to be with us, because we can't get to Him. We can't find God on our own. He must find us. As Christ said, *"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost"* (*Luke 19:10*).

Jesus—The Lord Saves

But they didn't name their Son **Immanuel**. The prophet called Him Immanuel because people would recognize in Him that God has come to be with us. They were told to and did give Him the name **Jesus**, which means *the Lord Saves*, because *He will save His people from their sins* (**v. 21**). This tells us **why** God came to be with us. His reason for coming was to save us from our sins. Some would say that Jesus came to the Jews because the Jews were the people of God. But God created everyone. While the Gospel was for the Jew first, God sent His Son into the world because He *loved the world* (**John 3:16**). All people are God's people, because He created us all. Of all the things Jesus did, the teaching, healing and miracles, his reason for coming was **salvation**. That's why the cross can't be separated from the manger. It was on the cross He said, "*It is finished*" (**John 19:30**). The mission was complete. The sacrifice was complete. Nothing more need be done for salvation.

Means of Grace

Because He is *God Who Is with Us to Save Us*, He could say, "*This is my body, which is given for you*" (**Luke 22:19**). His sacrifice was the perfect sacrifice, because He is God and Man, fully divine and fully human. God had to die, but God can't die. The sacrifice had to be perfect and human, but no human is perfect. He had to be God and Man. When we eat the bread and drink the wine, we are eating His body and drinking His blood, taking part in the sacrificial meal. Because He is **Immanuel** and **Jesus**, we have forgiveness of sins and strengthening of faith in His body and blood. That's *what's in a name*.

*May the peace of God,
Which passes all understanding,
Keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
