

# THE SALVATION EXPRESSED IN GOD'S NAME

Leader pages on pp. 116-119

**THE POINT:**  
EVERYONE WHO CALLS  
ON THE NAME OF JESUS  
WILL BE SAVED.

## ISAIAH 7:14; MATTHEW 1:18-25

Isa. <sup>7:14</sup> Therefore, the LORD himself will give you a sign: See, the virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel.

.....  
Matt. <sup>1:18</sup> The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way: After his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together that she was pregnant from the Holy Spirit.

<sup>19</sup> So her husband, Joseph, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her publicly, decided to divorce her secretly.

<sup>20</sup> But after he had considered these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

<sup>21</sup> **She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."**

.....  
<sup>22</sup> Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

<sup>23</sup> See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name him Immanuel, which is translated "God is with us."

<sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke up, he did as the Lord's angel had commanded him. He married her

<sup>25</sup> but did not have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son. And he named him Jesus.

MEMORY VERSE

+  
+  
+

KEYWORDS

**Immanuel (v. 14)**—This name means "God is with us." In the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy, the child the Lord commanded to be named Immanuel (Matt. 1:23) would bring salvation to the world as God's Son and Messiah, Jesus (John 3:16).

**Engaged (v. 18)**—The word engaged (*mnesteuo*) refers to the first-century Jewish practice known as betrothal, which was as binding as the actual marriage.



## HOW IS SALVATION EXPRESSED IN JESUS'S NAME?

As wonderful and cherished as our traditions are, they are far outweighed by the true meaning of this holiday. Most of us have heard (and said) that "Jesus is the reason for the season." As traditions, styles, and customs change, one thing remains the same. The very old story of the birth of our Lord has been handed down through the centuries and has never gotten stale or out of date. Jesus's reason for coming to earth, as had been foretold, was the salvation of humanity. This will always be a reason for celebration.

### He Was Promised to Us //

#### Isaiah 7:14

God often brings us into dire situations to help us realize our desperate need for His salvation. King Ahaz of Judah was in just such a position. The armies of Aram (Syria) and Ephraim (the northern tribes of Israel) were preparing to invade Judah. These massive forces might overwhelm Jerusalem. If so, Ahaz probably would be killed. Into this frightening setting, God sent the prophet Isaiah with a message for the king and his people. Isaiah told Ahaz to call on the name of the Lord. God had already determined to rescue Jerusalem.

However, instead of being joyous, the king retreated further into fear. Ahaz had continually led Judah into worshiping false gods. He even sacrificed his son to Moloch, the detestable idol of the Ammonites (2 Kings 16:3; 2 Chron. 28:3). The Lord's judgment of the king's abominable idolatry was one of the spiritual reasons behind the foreign attacks (2 Kings 16:1-4; 2 Chron. 28).

Isaiah's initial response challenges us today: "If you do not stand firm in your faith, then you will not stand at all" (Isa. 7:9). We must trust that God is with us regardless of circumstances. Without Him, we have no hope. Instead of trusting God, Ahaz tried every politically expeditious strategy to save himself (2 Kings 16:8-9). People who refuse God usually rely on their own efforts for salvation, only to fail.

When he was invited to ask for a sign of God's promise to be with him, Ahaz refused. Using a semi-pious response, Ahaz said he would not test the Lord. He was right and he was wrong. We should not test the Lord our God unless He invites us to do so. Isaiah declared God Himself would give a sign: "See, the virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel."

## THE POINT: EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF JESUS WILL BE SAVED.

God was using His promise of Immanuel to assure Ahaz (and us) that He is with us. More than a general sense of God's presence, Immanuel would be an actual person who was human and divine at the same time. The apostle John described how the eternal Christ took on flesh and was seen, touched, and experienced (John 1:14; 1 John 1:1-3).

We face many frightening challenges in our lives. Sometimes, the enemy is not an invading army, but the incursion of a deadly virus. Our foe may be economic disaster, physical affliction, emotional distress, or intellectual doubt. Like Ahaz, we can't imagine how we can survive the onslaught of overwhelming odds. We, too, are tempted to question God's love and trustworthiness. Our hope must be in Immanuel. God initiated Judah's salvation and ours. Jesus is God with us.

### HOW DOES KNOWING GOD IS WITH YOU GIVE YOU CONFIDENCE IN THE FACE OF TRIALS?

#### He Will Save Us // Matthew 1:18-21

Hundreds of years after Isaiah's encounter with Ahaz, God's promise of the Messiah came to pass. Most of us would like God to make things happen more quickly, but God is always on time. The apostle Paul wrote, "When the time came to completion, God sent his Son, born under the law" (Gal. 4:4). How could someone be the Son of God and also the Son of a woman? Matthew introduced the miracle simply: "The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way . . ."

Jesus's mother, Mary, was a young woman who had never had sexual relations with a man (Luke 1:34-35). Her engagement to Joseph involved much more in their culture than ours. Jewish marriage involved two stages. For a twelve-month betrothal period, the couple didn't have sexual relations. During this interval, Joseph discovered Mary was pregnant. He didn't know an angel had announced Mary would become the mother of the Messiah through the miraculous intervention of the Holy Spirit.

Joseph was a "righteous man." Righteousness according to Old Testament standards meant that someone genuinely sought to live according to God's ways. In Joseph's case, it simply indicated he wanted to do the right thing. He didn't desire to "disgrace" Mary publicly. A divorce was the only way their relationship could be severed, but Joseph was determined to do so secretly.

As with Mary's heavenly visit, an "angel of the Lord" appeared to Joseph in a dream. God used this dream to alleviate Joseph's concern about Mary and clarify His will concerning His Son. This word from God through His messenger would give Joseph courage to take on the daunting task he was assuming.



### DIGGING DEEPER GOD WITH US

In Matthew 1:23, the apostle took the prophecy of Isaiah about God's activity in Isaiah's day and found its ultimate meaning in Jesus's birth. The virgin birth of Jesus would be the sign of God's saving work among His people. Throughout his gospel, Matthew used the Old Testament to present Jesus as the One whom the Jews had been expecting. Whether in the time of Isaiah, the time of Matthew, or in the life of the church today, the abiding hope is that God is with us. In each situation, there is adversity that threatens the peace of God's people. God being with us in adversity does not solely mean that God travels alongside us, but that God transforms our circumstances and us in the midst of adversity. We can celebrate in any situation because God is with us.

#### How has God demonstrated to you that He is with you?



God went further with Joseph because of the unique circumstances. Specifying Joseph as “son of David,” the angel reminded him of the Messianic lineage traced through the house of David to Joseph. Joseph learned the child in Mary’s womb was the promised Messiah.

Sometimes, our dreams are vivid, only to become vague remembrances when we wake. Joseph, though, received unforgettable facts about the child.

- God had worked this miraculous conception through the Holy Spirit.
- Mary would give birth to a Son.
- Joseph would name the child “Jesus.”

Mary hadn’t been unfaithful but had submitted to the will of the Lord in faith. She understood the risk she was taking, yet humbly accepted God’s choice. Her child would be a boy. The plan for his life was already in place. God determined the nature of this child before His conception.

Naming a child was the father’s prerogative. In this case, God the Father named His Son “Jesus.” He instructed Joseph to assume the legal relationship with Mary that included naming the child.

The name “Jesus” was unusual since male children usually bore the names of their fathers or an ancestor. The word Jesus derived from the Greek form of Joshua, which means “Yahweh is salvation.” As such, Jesus bore the covenant name of God the Father, along with a declaration that

God saves. Jesus’s name described what He came to do—to “save his people from their sins.”

## HOW HAS GOD REVEALED HIS WILL FOR YOUR LIFE TO YOU?

### He Will Be with Us // Matthew 1:22-25

Jesus was the ultimate fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy. Regardless of various arguments over its context and terminology, only Jesus fulfills the name Immanuel—God with us. He was still all God, but at the same time He became all human so He might save human beings.

While the context fit the contemporary setting of Isaiah and Ahaz, the Messianic reference directs biblical readers toward the One who would be Immanuel—“God is with us.” Human attempts at rationalizing the divine miracle of the virgin birth fall short in the evidence that Jesus’s mother had never had sexual relations until after she gave birth to Jesus. He was conceived through the miraculous intervention of God the Holy Spirit.

Joseph knew he had experienced a supernatural visitation. Unlike most dreams that fade upon waking, Joseph’s encounter with the Lord’s angel remained with him. He vividly recalled what the heavenly messenger had commanded him, and he obeyed.

Joseph further obeyed the angel’s instructions to name the child “Jesus.” At first glance, readers may be confused, since Isaiah’s prophecy stated the Messiah would be called “Immanuel.” Jesus would be the child’s formal name, identifying Him with God the Father, as well as His purpose in salvation. Immanuel is who and what He is—God with us. Jesus was called by this name because it described how God was present with humanity in the person of Jesus—God the Son. Isaiah also prophesied this child would be called “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6).

## THE POINT: EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF JESUS WILL BE SAVED.

### WHAT CONNECTIONS DO YOU SEE BETWEEN THE NAMES “GOD IS SALVATION” AND “GOD IS WITH US”?

As Jesus’s disciples, we have a continuing relationship with Him. We abide in Him, and He abides in us through the Holy Spirit. Effectiveness in the Christian life, power for soul-winning, and success in developing disciples can only result from His being with us and in us (John 15:4-5).

The apostle Paul knew that he couldn’t live the Christian life in his own abilities. Through Jesus, Paul had been in effect crucified with Christ. His new life was possible through faith in the Son of God who loved him and gave Himself for him (Gal. 2:20). Paul’s favorite description of his status was to be “in Christ Jesus” (3:28).

This mystical union can’t be explained in human terms. We tend to describe matters according to natural laws. However, our only hope of glory—the ongoing relationship with God now and in heaven—is by Christ in us (Col. 1:27). Our daily communion with Him is possible not only because He fulfilled His identity as God with us, but at our salvation He came to be in us by the power and presence of His Holy Spirit.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Black Nativity is a version of the story of Jesus’s birth written by Langston Hughes. As a writer active during the Harlem Renaissance, Hughes is known for composing poetry and plays during that era of African American history. The Harlem Renaissance was an explosion of African American art, culture, and intellectual thought centered in the Harlem section of New York City during the 1920s and 1930s. Black Nativity has been performed throughout the United States and around the world, featuring actors of African descent portraying the characters of the biblical story and including stirring gospel music. The story was adapted for film in a 2013. Through its stage and film performances, Black Nativity has allowed many African Americans to see themselves reflected in the story of the birth of Jesus, which is truly a universal story celebrated by people across all races and cultures.

**Biblical Truth:** Jesus came to save the world (John 3:16). His mission was to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10).

**When have you seen the universal story of Jesus’s birth told in innovative ways?**

## LIVE IT

### How can you share the good news of Jesus’ birth with others in your community?

How do you react when trouble comes? By regularly calling on the name of the Lord in everyday life, we’ll be more confident in calling on Him to save us. Everyone who calls on His name will be saved. Jesus’ birth is a reason for celebration and gratitude for God’s grace in saving humanity. Use one or all of the following applications to experience how Jesus’s name means “Yahweh is salvation.”

+ + +

- **Think.** Think about times when you’ve faced difficult challenges and called on the name of the Lord. Consider how He helped you.
- **Thank.** Thank the Lord for salvation, especially for Jesus’ death and resurrection that provided atonement for your sins. Write a thank you card to God.
- **Thirst.** Desire a deeper relationship with your Savior by communing with Him throughout the day. Make it a priority to share Him with others. Set specific goals for when and how you will share from the overflow of God’s affection.

# DAILY READINGS

## 1. UNWANTED GIFT // MATTHEW 1:18-20

Joseph, a righteous man, gets the news that his fiancé, Mary, is pregnant. No need for a trip to the Maury show. He already knows what a deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) test would say. "You are not the father!" Joseph wanted nothing to do with Mary or this child until God shared his plan. Some of us may share Joseph's first mindset. We have the gift of salvation within our reach but have not yet taken hold of it as our own. Others of us have the gift of salvation, like Joseph who took Jesus as his own. But unlike him, we have not nurtured and cared for it.

**The value of its might has yet to take root in our hearts. We believe but still treat salvation like an unwanted gift.**

## 2. HE CALLED HIM JESUS // MATTHEW 1:21

We know Isaiah called The Messiah Immanuel meaning God with us. A named purpose. Joseph, however, is instructed to call Him Jesus. A name that reveals His mission and message. The mission was to save people. The message was that salvation comes from God alone. Joseph completed the assignment of guarding Jesus from conception to birth. Jesus then began spreading the message of His mission. Our task is to keep broadcasting the good news with a heart like Joseph's and the intentionality of Jesus. What does that look like? Boldly declaring Jesus as the only way to salvation before a world and culture that posits the idea of many ways to God.

**Jesus was and still is God's salvation vehicle. Call Him Jesus just like Joseph did. Your call will save lives.**

## 3. FROM THE INSIDE OUT // JOHN 15:4-5

In John 15, Jesus refers to Himself as the True Vine, God as the Gardener, and believers as branches. He gives a vivid warning to the branches. "Remain in me . . . because you can do nothing without me." Do you see it? A branch firmly connected to the vine growing and thriving from the vine's nutrients. It only thrives because of what is on the inside. All plant parents know that broken branches receive no nourishment.

They soon wither and die. There it is again. A blaring visual of what happens when God is not with us providing His care through us. We wither and die. Jesus didn't come simply to put God before us. He came so that God could live within us.

**Are you connected from the inside out?**

## 4. DO-GOODING // MARK 10:18

This is a great time of year for soul-reflection. We're near the close of the holy season. A time of intentional do-gooding. Add that new word to your vocabulary. Do-gooding: focused gift giving and rendering of services without expectation of return is good, especially during this season where a gift or service might mean the difference between a lonely, empty Christmas and one filled with cheer. At the same time, do-gooding without the nourishment of the True Vine could morph into self-righteousness. Evaluate your do-gooding. As well as who you are doing those things for. Misplaced intentions hurt more than they help.

**Even Jesus recognized that the righteousness that comes from God alone. Make sure your do-gooding is on God's agenda and not your own.**

## 5. COUNTDOWN // JEREMIAH 23:5

Jeremiah prophesied that a righteous Branch, Jesus, was coming to right wrongs. His words weren't the first messianic prophecy but might have encouraged fatigued Israelites to look for signs of the coming messiah counting down to salvation from their tumultuous existence. Such is the case in the current day except Jeremiah's prophecy has come to pass. Jesus, the Righteous Branch has come, but many are still looking for relief from the tumult. The last Sunday of the year is approaching. Weariness rather righteousness is a constant companion. How about our very own countdown . . . to the new year that is? A Jeremiah 23:5-like trek through rejuvenating truths about righteousness over the next five daily readings.

**Let's walk into the new year with a renewed confidence in Jesus.**