

INCARNATE PRESENCE

The miraculous birth of Jesus Christ did more than fulfill ancient Bible prophecies (hundreds of them). The incredible promises that were declared were also delivered, with His incarnate presence. That is, the eternal Son of God became a man, in order to keep His promises.

The second person of the triune God came to earth in human form, to be born of a virgin, to live a perfect life, die a perfect death, and be raised in perfect resurrection life. To be Lord and Savior of all who put their trust in Him for eternal salvation. This is the gift of all gifts!

PRESENCE PAST - Matthew says the child conceived in Mary was by the Holy Spirit, to fulfill Isaiah 7:14, "*Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel.*" He notes Immanuel means "*God with us.*"

In the Old Testament, the presence of the Lord answered their fears. In Joshua 1:9 the Lord strengthened the new leader of His people with the words, "*Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.*" In Isaiah 43:1-2 the Lord encouraged His people in their trials with the words "*I will be with you.*"

In 2Chronicles 13:12 and Isaiah 8:8,10, "*God with us*" meant that God was on the side of His people, and that nothing could thwart His purposes. But Matthew 1:23 speaks of the physical presence of the One who was to be born of the virgin. This is the promised Christ of God.

The angel also told Mary and Joseph to name this child Jesus, "*for He will save His people from their sins.*" Jesus was a common name (Joshua, Yeshua, Yehoshua in Hebrew) meaning "Jehovah God is salvation" or "Yahweh saves." With the birth of Jesus Christ 2,000 years ago, God came to be with His people in a physical person, in order to be the promised Deliverer.

PRESENCE PRESENT - The name "Jesus" indicates what He does as "God saves" through Him. To call Him "Immanuel" indicates who He is, as the Christ, the promised Messiah of God. He comes to be present with His people in order to save them. Luke records the fulfillment:

The angels proclaimed, "*Fear not, for behold I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.*"

This was the offspring promised throughout Scripture, specifically to Adam and Eve, to Abraham, and to King David. This was the son born of a virgin, the unique God-man, Jesus Christ. His earthly life fulfilled every prophecy and every requirement to be the perfect sacrifice for sin.

As His departure drew near, He told His disciples to "*Abide in Me, and I in you.*" The Holy Spirit was coming to dwell within them. He would never truly leave them, as He declares in Matthew 28:20, "*behold, I am with you always.*" The book of Acts describes the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, as the ascended Lord Jesus Christ continues His work through His obedient followers.

To be born again from above by the Holy Spirit is to receive Jesus as Christ, Lord and Savior, in spiritual union with Him. This union with Christ is "Christ in you" and "you in Christ." It describes the new spiritual reality of living as new creations in Christ, by the Spirit. It's what Jesus prayed in John 17, that all who believe in Him would be one in Christ. The Holy Spirit makes it so.

PRESENCE FUTURE - Just as the celebration of Christmas points to the coming of Christ some 2,000 years ago, it also heralds the promise of His coming again. This will be the consummation of the redemption that Christ has wrought through His life and death and resurrection.

This looks forward to the promised new heavens and earth. Then will be realized the words from the throne in Revelation 21, "*Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God.*"

Can you imagine a greater present? At the first Advent, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The presence of the Lord Jesus Christ became our salvation. At the last Advent, He returns to raise our earthly bodies and glorify them for eternal life in His presence forever. We will see Him as He is, in His glorified resurrection body, as our new life in Christ extends forever, with Him.

Does His eternal presence with you give you strength and encouragement for what you're going through? Receive Him, give thanks for His surpassing grace, the inexpressible gift of Christ! ☐