

God, With & For Us

By: Keith Keyser

Because it is God-breathed, every word of Holy Scripture is significant. Take, for example, the prepositions that are employed in the Bible. Matthew 1:23 - quoting Isaiah 7:14 - famously calls the Lord Jesus "Immanuel" and then translates it for his readers as "God **with** us." Rom. 8:31 uses another important preposition in connection with God, saying: "God **for** us" (literal rendering of the Greek text.) Together these phrases tell the story of the Almighty's detailed interest **in** and unparalleled love **for** His creatures.

The title Immanuel assures one that God is not distant from humanity. Specifically, He is not aloof from man's needs or suffering. Even in the spiritually decadent days of King Ahaz (the context of Isaiah's original statement), the Lord cared for His people and refused to desert them. In spite of their rampant idolatry and spiritual failure, God still protected His people from their enemies and maintained His plan for the nation.

After centuries of revelatory silence, God opens the New Testament with the renewed assurance that He is Immanuel (Matt. 1:23.) Could anyone doubt the veracity of this title, when Messiah Himself descended from heaven's glory to identify with His creation. Shepherds, who were the despised "Am ha-aretz,"¹ were the first privileged audience to hear the glad tidings of Immanuel's birth. Throughout His life on earth, the Lord Jesus freely mingled with sinners, including societal outcasts like tax-collectors and prostitutes. Instead of defiling Him, Christ's interaction with this off-scouring of humanity resulted in their spiritual and moral transformation. He summed up His closeness to the dregs of society in these words: "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" (Mark 2:17.) In the person of His Son, the eternal God came to be with us, even at our lowest, so that He could raise us to His glory by grace.

Romans 8:31 uses another beautiful preposition in connection with God: "What then shall we say **to** these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us?" (ASV.) This rhetorical question powerfully articulates the faithful support of the Almighty for His own. His omnipotence and omniscience are marshaled on their behalf against every earthly or spiritual foe. He is committed to conforming them to the image of Christ, thereby enabling them to share in His glory (8:29-30; 1 John 3:1-3.) That God is for us is unquestionably demonstrated by the giving of His Son to be the delivering sacrifice for their sins (v. 31.) If anyone doubts the unshakable commitment of the Almighty to love and save the lost, they have only to look at Calvary. In the sacrifice of Christ one sees the love, grace, justice, mercy, and holiness of God all in perfect display. Praise the Lord, that God is **with** us and **for** us!

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1. Literally "People of the Land" - a pejorative expression somewhat analogous to the modern American term "Rednecks." They were thought of as uncouth and lower-class; what is more, their close working proximity to animals and their bodily secretions frequently rendered them ceremonially unclean.