

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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IMMANUEL—THE LIGHT OF LIFE.

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## A Sermon

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“Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.”—Isaiah ix. 1, 2.

As in this case the Revised Version is much to be preferred, we will now read it:—

“But there shall be no gloom to her that was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time hath he made it glorious, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.”—Isaiah ix. 1, 2.

When Judah was in sore distress, the sign that she should be delivered was Immanuel. “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah vii. 14). When no other ray of comfort could be found, light came from the promise of the wondrous birth of him whose name is “God with us.” God alone would be the deliverer of Judah when over-matched by her two enemies. God would be with them, and he gave them as a pledge a vision of that time when, in very deed, God would dwell among men, and wear their nature in the person of The Virgin-born.

It is noteworthy that the clearest promises of the Messiah have been given in the darkest hours of history. If the prophets had been silent upon the Coming One before, they always speak out in the cloudy and dark day; for well the Spirit made them know that the coming of God in human flesh is the lone star of the world's night. It was so in the beginning, when our first parents had sinned, and were doomed to quit the Paradise of delights. It was not meet that rebels should be dwellers in the garden of the Lord, they must go forth to till the ground from whence they were taken; but ere they went, there fell upon their ear the prophecy of the Deliverer who would be born: “The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.” How bright shone that one promise amid the surrounding gloom! The earliest believers found in this hope of the coming Conqueror of the serpent a solace amid their labour and sorrow. When Israel was in

Egypt, when they were in the sorest bondage, and when many plagues had been wrought on Pharaoh, apparently without success; for he knew not the Lord, neither would he let his people go; then Israel saw the Messiah set before her as the Paschal lamb, whose blood sprinkled on the lintel and the two side posts secured the chosen from the avenger of blood. The type is marvellously clear, and the times were marvellously dark. It seemed as if the Lord would make the consolation to abound even as the tribulation abounded.

I will not multiply instances; but I will quote three cases from the prophetic books which now lie open before us. In Isaiah, turn to his twenty-eighth chapter, and the sixteenth verse, and you read that glorious prophecy: "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." When was that given? It was pronounced when the foundation of society in Israel was rotten with iniquity, and when its corner stone was oppression. Read from verse fourteen: "Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves." Thus, when lies and falsehoods ruled the hour, the Lord proclaims the blessed truth that the Messiah would come and would be a sure foundation for believers. Next, look into Jeremiah, and pause at the twenty-third chapter and the fifth verse: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." When was this clear testimony given? Read the former verses of the chapter, and see that the pastors were destroying and scattering the sheep of Jehovah's pasture. When the people of the Lord thus found their worst enemies where they ought to have met with friendly care, then they were promised happier days through the coming of the divine Son of David. I will only further detain you while we glance at Ezekiel xxxiv. 23, where the Lord says, "And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd." When came this cheering promise concerning that great Shepherd of the sheep? It came when Israel is thus described: "And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them." Thus you see that, in each case, when things were at their worst, the Lord Jesus was the one well of consolation in a desert of sorrows.

"Midst darkest shades, if he appear,  
Our dawning has begun;  
He is our soul's bright morning star,  
And he our rising sun."

In the worst times we are to preach Christ, and to look to Christ. In Jesus there is a remedy for the direst of diseases, and a rescue from the darkest of despairs. Ahaz, as the chapter tells us, was in great danger, for he was attacked by two kings, each one stronger than himself; but the Lord promised him deliverance, and commanded him to choose a sign either in the heights, or in the depths. This, under a hypocritical pretence, he refused to do; and therefore the Lord chose as his own token the appearance of the heavenly Deliverer, who would be God, and yet born of a woman. "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." He was to eat butter and honey, like other children in that land of milk and honey, and yet he was to be the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. We see here Godhead in union with manhood. We behold Jesus man "of the substance of his mother," and yet "God over all, blessed for ever." Surely this God-appointed sign was both in the depth and in the height above: the Man of sorrows, the Son of the Highest. This vision was the light of the age of Ahaz. It is God's comfort to troubled hearts in all the ages; it is God's sign of grace to us this morning. The sure hope of sinners and the great joy of saints is the incarnate Lord, Immanuel, God with us. May he be your joy and mine even this day. He it is who is the great light of the people who dwell in the land of the shadow of death: if any among you are in that dreary land, may he be light and life to you! He alone could make the darkness of Zebulun and Naphtali to disappear in a blaze of glory: he can do the same for those who sorrow at this hour.

Now, if I may have your patient attention, I shall, as I am enabled, *illustrate this fact by the context*. Scripture best explains Scripture, as diamond cuts diamond. The Word of God carries its own keys for all its locks. It is profitable to study Scripture, not in fragments, but in connected paragraphs. It is well to see the glory of a star, but better to behold the whole constellation in which it shines. When I have dwelt upon the context, I shall, in the second place, *press home certain joyful truths connected with the subject*.

I. There is to be a light breaking in upon the sons of men who sit in darkness, and this light is to be found only in the incarnate God. Let me ILLUSTRATE THIS FACT BY THE CONTEXT.

I must carry you back to the fourteenth verse of the seventh chapter. *The sign of coming light is Jesus*. "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." In Judah's trouble, the Virgin-born was God's token that he would deliver, and that speedily; for in less time than it would take such a child to reach years of knowledge, both Judah's royal adversaries would be gone. The sign was good for Ahaz; but it is better far for us. Behold the incarnate Son of God born of Mary at Bethlehem; what can this intend for us but grace? If the Lord had meant to destroy us, he would not have assumed our nature. If he had not been moved with mighty love to a guilty race, he would never have taken upon himself their flesh and blood. It is a miracle of miracles that the Infinite should become an infant; that he who is pure spirit, and filleth all things, should be

wrapped in swaddling bands, and cradled in a manger. He took not on him the nature of angels, though that would have been a tremendous stoop from Deity, but he descended lower still; for he took on him the seed of Abraham. "He was made in all things like unto his brethren"; though "he counted it not robbery to be equal with God." It is not in the power of human lips to speak out all the comfort which this one sign contains. If any troubled soul will look believably at God in human flesh, he must take heart of hope. If he looks believably, his comfort will come right speedily. The birth of Jesus is the proof of the good will of God to men: I am unable to conceive of proof more sure. He would not have come here to be born among men, to live among them, suffer and to die for them, if he had been slow to pardon, or unwilling to save. O despairing soul, does not Immanuel, God with us, make it hard to doubt the mercy of the Lord?

We have comfort in the fact that our Lord was truly man. He whom we worship became one with us in nature. He was born as other children are born, save that his mother was a virgin. He was fed as other children were fed, upon curds and honey, the food of a pastoral country. He had to be developed, as to his natural powers, even as other little ones. He grew up from childhood to youth, and from youth to manhood, passing through all the gradations of human weakness, even as we have done; and he was obedient to his parents, even as other children should be. He is, therefore, really and truly a man; and this fact is a bright particular star for sinners' eyes. Come to Jesus, all ye who languish under terror and dread because of the majesty of Deity; for here you see how compassionate he is, how sympathetic he can be, yea, how near of kin he has become. He is God; but he is God *with us*. He is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, a brother born for adversity; and here the most trembling may be at rest. God in our nature is a grand prophecy of salvation and bliss for us. Why has he come down to us but that we may come up to him? Why has he taken our nature in its sorrow, but that we may be made partakers of the divine nature in righteousness and holiness? He comes down, not to thrust us lower, but to lift us to heights of perfectness and glory. That Jesus is man and yet God, is full of hope and joy for us who believe in him. I do not feel as if I wanted to enlarge upon this glorious truth with words alone. Oh, that the Holy Spirit would convey to each one of my hearers the light which shines from the star of incarnation! Oh, that at this moment the people who walk in darkness may see in the incarnate God a great light, and perceive in him the prophecy and assurance of all good things! Not long shall evil oppress the believer; for in Christ Jesus God is with us; and if God be for us, who can be against us?

"O joy! there sitteth in our flesh,  
Upon a throne of light,  
One of a human mother born,  
In perfect Godhead bright!

"For ever God, for ever man,  
My Jesus shall endure;  
And fix'd on him, my hope remains  
Eternally secure."

Further on we see our Lord Jesus as *the hold-fast of the soul in time of darkness*. See in the eighth verse of the eighth chapter the whole country overwhelmed by the fierce armies of the Assyrians, as when a land is submerged beneath a flood. Then you read—"And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel." The one hope that remained for Judah was that her country was Immanuel's land. There would Immanuel be born, there would he labour, and there would he die. He was by eternal covenant the King of that land, and no Assyrian could keep him from his throne. Whatever the enemy might do, the land was still "thy land, O Immanuel!" If, my dear friend, you are a believer in Christ, you belong to him, and you always were his by sovereign right, even when the enemy held you in possession. The devil had set his mark upon you, so that you might be for ever his branded slave; but he had no legal right to you, for Immanuel had redeemed you, and he claimed you as his own. Had we known, we might exultingly have gloried over you, "Thy soul, O Immanuel!" The Father gave you to Jesus, and Jesus himself bought you with his blood; and, though you knew it not, he had the title-deeds of you, and would not lose his inheritance. Herein lay your hope when all other hope was gone. Herein is your hope now. If you belong to Jesus, he will have you. If he bought you with his blood, he will not shed that blood in vain. If on the cross he bore your sin, he will not suffer you to bear it, and so to make void his sacrifice. If you belong to him he will deliver you, even as David snatched the lamb of his flock from the jaw of the lion and the paw of the bear. O sinner, this is the great hope we have for you: if you were given of old to Jesus he will rescue you from the hand of the enemy. This, also, is your own hope: if you believe in Jesus you belong to Jesus; if you trust him, he has redeemed you with a price, and will also redeem you with power. If you cast your guilty soul at his dear feet, and take him to be your own Saviour, you are not your own, but bought with a price; and sooner shall heaven and earth pass away than one whom Jesus calls his own shall be left to perish. "Having loved his own, he loved them unto the end." Immanuel, God with us, is strong to rescue his own out of the enemy's hand.

Further on in the chapter we learn that Jesus is *our star of hope as to the destruction of the enemy*. The foes of God's people shall be surely vanquished and destroyed because of Immanuel. Note well, in verses 9 and 10, how it is put twice over, like an exultant taunt: "Gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for Immanuel." Our version translates the word into "God with us," but it is "Immanuel." In him, even in our Lord Jesus Christ, dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and he has brought all that Godhead to bear upon the overthrow of the foes of his people. Let the powers of darkness consult and plot as they may, they can never destroy the Lord's redeemed. Lo! I see councils of evil spirits: they sit down in Pandemonium, and conspire to ruin a soul redeemed by

blood. They lay their heads together, they use a cunning deep as hell: they are eager to destroy the soul that rests in Jesus. In vain their devices, for the incarnate God is embodied wisdom. Now see them: they rise from the council table, they put on their harness; their arrows are dipped in malice, and their bows are strong to shoot afar. Each foul spirit takes his sword, his sharp sword, that will cut a soul to the centre, and kill it with despair; but their weapons shall all fail. If we fly to Jesus, who is God with us, no weapon that is formed against us shall prosper. His name Immanuel is the terror of the hosts of hell. God with us means confusion to our foes. As the death of death, and hell's destruction, our Immanuel cries to the legions of the pit, "Gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces"! Let us take courage and defy the legions of darkness. Let us charge them with this war-cry, "God is with us." Immanuel, who has espoused our cause, is God himself, almighty to save: the enemies of our souls shall be trodden under his feet, and he shall bruise Satan even under our feet shortly. Satan from the first hated God in our nature, for thus man was exalted beyond the angel; and this his pride could not endure. The Lord Jesus is as the star Wormwood to our spiritual adversaries, rousing their fiercest hate, and foreboding their sure overthrow.

Further on we find *the Lord Jesus as the morning light after a night of darkness*. The last verses of the eighth chapter picture a horrible state of wretchedness and despair: "And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry: and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward. And they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness." But see what a change awaits them! Read the fine translation of the Revised Version: "But there shall be no gloom to her that was in anguish." What a marvellous light from the midst of a dreadful darkness! It is an astounding change, such as only God with us could work. Many of you know nothing about the miseries described in those verses; but there are some here who have traversed that terrible wilderness; and I am going to speak to them. I know where you are this morning: you are being driven as captives into the land of despair, and for the last few months you have been tramping along a painful road, "hardly bestead and hungry." You are sorely put to it, and your soul finds no food of comfort, but is ready to faint and die. You fret yourself: your heart is wearing away with care, and grief, and hopelessness. In the bitterness of your soul you are ready to curse the day of your birth. The captive Israelites cursed their king who had led them into their defeat and bondage; in the fury of their agony, they even cursed God and longed to die. It may be that your heart is in such a ferment of grief that you know not what you think, but are like a man at his wits' end. Those who led you into sin are bitterly remembered; and as you think upon God you are troubled. This is a dreadful case for a soul to be in, and it involves a world of sin and misery. You look up, but the heavens are as brass above your head;

your prayers appear to be shut out from God's ear; you look around you upon the earth, and behold "trouble and darkness, and dimness of anguish"; your every hope is slain, and your heart is torn asunder with remorse and dread. Every hour you seem to be hurried by an irresistible power into greater darkness, yea, even into the eternal midnight. In such a case none can give you comfort save Immanuel, God with us. Only God, espousing your cause, and bearing your sin, can possibly save you. See, he comes for your salvation! Behold, he has come to seek and to save that which was lost. God has come down from heaven, and veiled himself in our flesh, that he might be able to save to the uttermost. He can save the chief of sinners: he can save *you*. Come to Jesus, you that have gone furthest into transgression, you that sit down in despondency, you that shut yourselves up in the iron cage of despair. For such as you there shines this star of the first magnitude. Jesus has appeared to save, and he is God and man in one person: man that he may feel our woes, God that he may help us out of them. No minister can save you, no priest can save you—you know this right well; but here is one who is able to save to the uttermost, for he is God as well as man. The great God is good at a dead lift; when everything else has failed, the lever of omnipotence can lift a world of sin. Jesus is almighty to save! That which in itself is impossibility is possible with God. Sin which nothing else can remove is blotted out by the blood of Immanuel. Immanuel, our Saviour, is God with us; and God with us means difficulty removed, and a perfect work accomplished. But I fail to tell you in words. Oh, that the light itself would shine into your souls, that those of you who have as yet no hope may see a great light, and may from henceforth be of good courage!

Once more, dear friends, we learn from that which follows our text, that *the reign of Jesus is the star of the golden future*. He came to Galilee of the Gentiles, and made that country glorious, which had been brought into contempt. That corner of Palestine had very often borne the brunt of invasion, and had felt more than any other region the edge of the keen Assyrian sword. They were at first troubled when the Assyrian was bought off with a thousand talents of silver; but they were more heavily afflicted when Tiglath-pileser carried them all away to Assyria, for which see the fifteenth chapter of the second book of the Kings. It was a wretched land, with a mixed population, despised by the purer race of Jews; but that very country became glorious with the presence of the incarnate God. It was there that all manner of diseases were healed; there the seas were stilled, and the multitudes were fed; it was there that the Lord Jesus found his apostles, and there he met the whole company of his followers when he had risen from the dead. That first land to be invaded by the enemy was made the head-quarters of the army of salvation: this very Zebulun and Naphtali, which had been so downtrodden and despised, was made the scene of the mighty works of the Son of God. Even so, at this day his gracious presence is the day-dawn of our joy.

If Christ comes to you, my dear hearer, as God with us, then shall your joy be great; for you shall joy as with the joy of harvest, and as those rejoice that divide the spoil. Is it not so? Many of us can

bear our witness that there is no joy like that which Jesus brings. Here read and interpret the third verse of the ninth chapter.

Then shall your enemy be defeated, as in the day of Midian. Gideon was, in his dream, likened to a barley-cake, which struck the tent of Midian, so that it lay along. He and his few heroes, with their pitchers and their trumpets, stood and shouted, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" and Midian melted away before them. So shall it be with our sins, and doubts, and fears, if we believe in Jesus, the incarnate God; they shall vanish like the mists of the morning. The Lord Jesus will break the yoke of our burden, and the rod of our oppressor, as in the day of Midian. Be of good courage, ye that are in bondage to fierce and cruel adversaries; for in the name of Jesus, who is God with us, you shall destroy them. This you see in the fourth verse. Please follow me as I dwell on each verse.

When Jesus comes, you shall have eternal peace; for his battle is the end of battles. "All the armour of the armed man in the tumult, and the garments rolled in blood, shall even be for burning, for fuel of fire." This is the rendering of the Revision; and it is good. The Prince of peace wars against war, and destroys it. What a glorious day is that in which the Lord breaketh the bow and cutteth the spear in sunder, and burneth the chariot in the fire! I think I see it now. My sins, which were the weapons of my foes, the Lord piles in heaps. What mountains of prey! But see! he brings the fire-brand of his love from the altar of his sacrifice, and he sets fire to the gigantic pile. See how they blaze! They are utterly consumed for ever. The enemy has now no weapon that he can use against my soul. The incarnate God has broken the power of the adversary, for the sting of death is sin, and that he has made an end of. He has thus destroyed the war which raged in our souls, and now he reigns as Prince of peace, and we have peace in him.

Now is it that the Lord Jesus becomes glorious in our eyes; and he whose name is Immanuel is now crowned in our heart with many crowns, and honoured with many titles. What a list of glories we have here! What a burst of song it makes when we sing of the Messiah: "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace"! Each word sounds like a salvo of artillery. It is all very well to hear players on instruments and sweet singers rehearse these words; but to believe them, and realize them in your own soul, is better far. When every fear and every hope, and every power and every passion of our nature fill the orchestra of our heart, and all unite in one inward song unto the glorious Immanuel, what music it is! He is to us the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, and much more than words can tell. Do but get Christ Jesus in your soul, as the incarnate God, and he will set up a government within your nature which shall bring you peace, and righteousness, and joy, and eternal glory. He will so reign over you that your happiness shall know no bound; but you shall climb from grace to grace, from joy to joy, from peace to peace, yea, from heaven to the highest heaven. This all along shall be your divinest comfort, that Jesus is both God and man, even God with us.

Thus have I very briefly skimmed over the connection. Had we time and grace, what a wealth of thought might be drawn from these inexhaustible mines!

II. But now, secondly, I want to PRESS HOME CERTAIN TRUTHS CONNECTED WITH MY THEME. Come, Holy Spirit, to help the preacher! Come, divine Comforter, to troubled hearts, and give them rest in Immanuel!

Immanuel is a grand word. "God with us" means more than tongue can tell. It means enmity removed on our part, and justice vindicated on God's part. It means the whole Godhead engaged on our side, resolved to bless us.

But you say to me, "Who is this? Are you sure that Immanuel is Jesus of Nazareth?" Yes, *Jesus is Immanuel*. Will you turn to Matthew i. 21, and read onward, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying: Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." Do you see this? They call his name Jesus to fulfil the prophecy that they should call his name Immanuel! It is a singular fulfilment surely. It can only be accounted for by the fact that the Holy Spirit regards the name "Jesus" as being tantamount to the name "Immanuel." The Saviour is God with us. Jesus, a Saviour, is, in the Hebrew, Joshua, or Jehoshua, that is, Jehovah saving. The sense is the same as that of Immanuel, or "God with us," or for us; since God for us is sure to save us. The two names are the same in essential meaning. If God has come to save, then God is with us; if God himself is our salvation, then God is on our side; and if the child born of the virgin be indeed the Lord of glory, then is God our friend. Strong Son of God! Immortal Love! We have not seen thy face; but we can trust thy power, and rest upon thy love. Thy very birth brings hope; but as for thy death, when thou didst bear our sins in thine own body on the tree, this is the fulfilment of all our desires, in the cancelling of sin, the removal of wrath, and the securing of eternal life. Yes, Jesus is God with us.

Perhaps you wish to know a little more of the incident in the text which exhibits *Jesus as the great light*. We have spoken of Zebulun and Naphtali: were those regions really benefited by the coming of the Lord Jesus? Just look a little further on, to Matthew iv. 12: "Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Yes, beloved, our Lord made his home in the darkest parts. He looked about and saw no country so

ignorant, no country so sorrowful, as Galilee of the Gentiles, and therefore he went there, and lifted it up to heaven by priceless privileges! His ministry of repentance and faith was in itself a glorious light; but he did many mighty works to confirm it. Why, the whole country round was full of sick folk whom he had restored. You could not go half a mile but what you met a blind man who told of how Jesus had restored his sight, or a sick woman who had been raised up from the fever, or some paralytic who had been made whole. That country must have been glad indeed. Multitudes would never forget how they heard him by the sea. They said, "What sermons he preached! He made our hearts dance for joy; and then he fed us, and we ate of barley loaves and little fish till we were filled. He is a wonderful prophet, and this is a wonderful country; once dark enough, but now enlightened by his presence." Beloved, I pray that Jesus may come to you if you are in the dark to-day, and work miracles for you, feed you, and teach you, and make you glad, so that, though you were the most unhappy of beings, you may become the happiest of mortal men. Galilee, plundered, despoiled, despised, became, by-and-by, glorious, because of him who is Immanuel. This is a happy omen for you, dear friends: if you have been the most sorrowful of beings, the Lord Jesus may come at once to you and make you rejoice with great joy. Jesus rescues from contempt, from ignorance, from misery, from despair, and therein reveals himself as "God with us."

We will turn back to where we opened our Bibles at the first, and there we learn that, to be God with us, *Jesus must be accepted by us*. He cannot be with us if we will not have him. Hear how the prophet words it: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." As a child he was born, as a son he was given. He comes to us in two ways—in his human nature, born; in his divine nature, given. But I want you to see that all the sweetness and light that can come to you through him, must come by your putting both your hands upon him, and taking him to be your own. Here is one hand, "*Unto us a child is born*"; here is the other, "*Unto us a son is given*." Do you ask, "What are these two hands?" I received a note from one of my hearers, who pleads, "Tell me, sir, what faith is; tell me what you mean by believing and trusting." My dear friend, I am always telling you *that*, and I mean to keep on always telling you it so long as I have a tongue to move. By a daring act of appropriation take Jesus to be yours, and say with me—oh, that we could all say it in one great shout!—"UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN, UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN." God gives him, we take him. He is born, we take him up in our arms, and feel ready to cry, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." He is a Son given. Shall we not accept this gift of gifts, and love him because he has first loved us? To believe is to take freely what God gives freely. It is the simplest thing that can be. I could not explain to you what to drink is; but I will put this glass to my lips, and actually perform the action. Now you see what it is. The water is put to the lip, it is allowed to flow into the mouth and down the throat, and so it is drunk. Take Christ just so. Up

to the very lip of your reception he flows; open the mouth of your soul, and take him into yourself. "May I?" say you. May you? You are threatened with damnation if you do not; for this is one side of the gospel message, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." A man may certainly do that which involves him in condemnation if he does not do it. That awful threatening is one of the most powerful bits of gospel that I know of: it drives while the promise draws. If you want Christ, you may have him. If you desire to have God with you, he waits to be gracious unto you. If you wish for Immanuel, behold him in Jesus, your Lord.

"Oh, but I wish I had some sign that I might be sure!" What sign do you want beyond the gift of God, the birth of Jesus? Away with demands which are wild and ungenerous. The Word of God bids you believe and live. The moment you believe in Jesus he is yours. Say, then, this morning, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given," and say it with fulness of delight.

Be sure that you go on with the verse to the end—"and the government shall be upon his shoulder." If Christ is your Saviour he must be your King.

"But know, nor of the terms complain,  
Where Jesus comes he comes to reign:  
To reign, and with no partial sway;  
Lusts must be slain that disobey."

The moment we really believe in Jesus as our salvation we fall before him, and call him Master and Lord. We serve when he saves. He has redeemed us unto himself, and we own that we are his. A generous man once bought a slave-girl. She was put upon the block for auction, and he pitied her and purchased her; but when he had bought her he said to her, "I have bought you to set you free. There are your papers, you are a free woman." The grateful creature fell at his feet and cried, "I will never leave you; if you have made me free I will be your servant as long as you live, and serve you better than any slave could do." This is how we feel towards Jesus. He sets us free from the dominion of Satan, and then, as we need a ruler, we say, "And the government shall be upon his shoulder." We are glad to be ruled by "Immanuel, God with us." This also is a door of hope to us. That Jesus shall be the monarch of our hearts is our exceeding joy. To us he shall be always "Wonderful." When we think of him, or speak about him, it shall be with reverent awe. When we need advice and comfort, we will fly to him, for he shall be our Counsellor. When we need strength, we will look to him as our Mighty God. Born again by his Spirit, we will be his children, and he shall be the Everlasting Father. Full of joy and rest, we will call him Prince of Peace.

Are you willing to have Christ to govern you? Will you spend your lives in praising him? You are willing to have Christ to pardon you, but we cannot divide him, and therefore you must also have him to sanctify you. You must not take the crown from his head; but accept him as the monarch of your soul. If you would have his hand

to help you, you must obey the sceptre which it grasps. Blessed Immanuel, we are right glad to obey thee! In thee our darkness ends, and from the shadow of death we rise to the light of life. It is salvation to be obedient to thee. It is the end of gloom to her that was in anguish to bow herself before thee. May God the Holy Spirit take of the things of Christ and show them unto us, and then we shall all cry—

‘Go worship at Immanuel’s feet!  
See in his face what wonders meet!  
Earth is too narrow to express  
His worth, his grace, his righteousness.’

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PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah vii. 10—16;  
viii. 5—8, 19—22; ix. 1—7.

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HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—251, 260, 256.

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