

## God With Us

Matthew 1:18-23 (HCSB)

I want to introduce you to the three heaviest words humanity has ever heard: God with us. But these words might not carry the intended weight, because we inject them with our presuppositions. In order to know their weight, we must know how God intended them--for that, we need the OT. The New Testament makes little sense without the Old Testament...

and the Gospel proclaimed is not good news at all, unless we understand the backstory.

I want to take you on a short study of every book of the Old Testament.

Pulling out a theme: God's purpose to dwell with people as explained by covenants

## God's eternal purpose

### Genesis

- God dwells in a creation (Adam) **AP!**
- God dwells with a family (Abraham)

## How a covenant relationship with God intersects with life

### Psalms - when covenant love affects emotion

- covenant relationship between God and man
- instead of teaching theology, people of God are crying theology out according to His covenant love

### Proverbs - when the fear of the Lord directs your intellect

- all religions have wise sayings, but what makes the Proverbs different is the *fear of the Lord*

### Job - what covenant reveals about suffering

- human suffering + divine sovereignty = there's a bigger story going on than you!

### Song of Songs - when covenant love reveals about sexuality

- physical intimacy is wonderful, but not untouched by the fall (contra. the idol of sex)

### Ecclesiastes - how covenant instructs your pursuits, dreams, career, vocation, money

- life apart from God is meaningless (contra. the idol of pleasure and vices)

### Exodus

- God dwells with a **nation** via the Law
- God dwells with a nation in a tabernacle (19:16)
  - **Israel breaks the Mosaic covenant**

### Leviticus

- God's dwelling with sinners is a paradox: how do holiness and sin coincide? (Wright, 333)
  - something had to die. sacrifices were needed for this, hence the bloodiness of chapters 1-7
- The promise...

#### Leviticus 26:12

I will place My residence among you, and I will not reject you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be My people.

### Numbers

- people complain, rebel, and stay in the wilderness
- **God dwells with Israel in the wilderness** (Sinai 1:19; Paran 10:21; Moab 22:1)
- the old generation dies off because they **refuse to keep the covenant**, so God starts over

## Deuteronomy

- covenant renewal
- *unified*

Deuteronomy 12:5

Instead, you must turn to the place Yahweh your God chooses from all your tribes to put His name for His dwelling and go there

## Joshua

- **promised land**  
Utopia?

## Judges

- **autonomous, organic leadership**
- people rebel against God's covenantal rule, God punishes, people cry out, God sends a deliver, repeat
  - this is the downward spiral of Judges: **keep breaking the covenant**

## Samuel AP!

- **Monarchy** - from judges (Samuel) to **kings** (Saul/David)

1 Sam. 8:4-7

So all the elders of Israel gathered together and went to Samuel at Ramah. They said to him, "Look, you are old, and your sons do not follow your example. Therefore, appoint a king to judge us the same as all the other nations have." When they said, "Give us a king to judge us," Samuel considered their demand sinful, so he prayed to the Lord. But the Lord told him, "Listen to the people and everything they say to you. They have not rejected you; they have rejected Me as their king.

- the people are not satisfied with an invisible God, they want a human to lead them
- hint of a permanent dwelling place (2 Sam. 7:12-13)

## Kings

- **God dwells in a temple (ch. 8)**
- Monarchy fails (for the same reason theocracy did: sinners)
  - a period of schism and division in the kingdom
  - they continue to **break the covenant**
    - God enacts the stipulations of disobeying the covenant...
    - 1st exile occurs (586-539 B.C.)

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## In the midst of man's sin, the prophets reveal more of God's covenantal plan...

### Isaiah

- Isaiah recognizes that Israel has yet to realize God's covenant to be holy
- how can the tension between grace and judgment be relieved? A remnant must be brought out by God

### Jeremiah

- they need changed hearts and a new covenant

### Hosea

- a covenant based on His faithfulness, not ours

1. the Sinai Covenant was pointing to a need to be saved. We need a better covenant to bring us to God.
2. God desires all nations to be saved...

### Joel

- mercy on all nations who call out to God, not just Israel

- **covenant of Abraham is meant for all the nations!**

Joel 2:28

After this I will pour out My Spirit on all humanity

Joel 2:32a

Then everyone who calls on the name of Yahweh will be saved

**Habakkuk**

- all of the nations are wicked
- **all of the earth will one day be God's dwelling**

Habakkuk 2:14

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord's glory, as the waters cover the sea.

It's an ocean of God's presence!

**Micah:** *Yet people don't want God, so He must send someone to save them from themselves* **AP!**

Micah 2:12

I will indeed gather all of you, Jacob; I will collect the remnant of Israel. I will bring them together like sheep in a pen, like a flock in the middle of its fold.

Micah 7:18

Who is a God like You, removing iniquity and passing over rebellion for the remnant of His inheritance? He does not hold on to His anger forever, because He delights in faithful love.

- God promises to send a rescuer out of Bethlehem to accomplish this

Micah 5:2

Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are small among the clans of Judah; One will come from you to be ruler over Israel for Me. His origin is from antiquity, from eternity.

There is a promise: God must intervene. We just don't know how yet.

These post-exilic books describe a lack of God's presence and the despair that's felt

**Haggai**

- Cyrus captures Babylon, lets the Hebrews restore their temple (538 B.C.)
  - but the Hebrews are totally over it; only some return
    - The people care more about their homes than God's dwelling place...

Haggai 1:3-4 (cf.9)

The word of the Lord came through Haggai the prophet: "Is it a time for you yourselves to live in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?"

- A promise of a greater glory than the original temple...

Haggai 2:9

The final glory of this house will be greater than the first," says the Lord of Hosts. "I will provide peace in this place"—this is the declaration of the Lord of Hosts

**Zechariah**

- they feel an **absence** of God
- God's people feel **insignificance**

**Malachi**

- God's presence is gone (implied in 3:1)

## Last time God spoke (Malachi = 475-450 BC) Silence for 4 centuries!

Until...

Story of an engaged couple. 1) pregnant 2) divorce 3) angel 4) all human history is waiting for this

**Matthew 1:23**

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."

History then is left with an uncomfortable tension: how can a holy God still dwell among sinful people who break his covenant and disobey him? If you want the job done, you gotta do it yourself.

**John 1:14-18**

The Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We observed His glory, the glory as the One and Only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth...Indeed, we have all received grace after grace from His fullness, for the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. The One and Only Son—the One who is at the Father's side—He has revealed Him.

**And the silence is broken!**

**You feel...**

you can't feel God (Zechariah)

you can't see God (Haggai)

you can't hear God (Malachi)

**We feel the OT is irrelevant and far-removed, but we chase the same things they did!**

environment (garden)

family (Abraham)

nation (Israel)

journey (wilderness)

generation (Numbers)

neighborhood (promised land)

autonomy (judges)

leaders (monarchy)

sex (SoS)

intellect (Proverbs)

entertainment or success (Ecclesiastes)

Problem: our biggest problem is our own sin

She will give birth to a son, and you are to name Him Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins (21)

- and our deepest need is the presence of God

This (and the hope of the world) has been fulfilled in the birth of a baby.

Christmas is the story of how...

**God moved history to get to you.**

He dies for you. And He waits for you now.

**Ephesians 3:11 (HCSB)**

This is according to His eternal purpose accomplished in the Messiah, Jesus our Lord.

Look back (not just on Israel's history) but yours, and ask yourself, "am I saving myself?"

Seek not in courts nor palaces

Nor royal curtains draw--

But search the stable, see your God

Extended on the straw. -William Billings

**Jesus is Immanuel. Jesus is "God with us"**