

Christmas Series 2022 - God With Us

Matthew 1:23

*And you shall call His name, Immanuel,
which means, "God with us"*

What's in a name? We've spent the past six months talking and learning about the Holy Spirit - that he's not weird (but people are). We need that help - we need the *Helper* - for revival to come and break the polarizing atmosphere - people against the Holy Spirit, or those on the opposite extreme. Dr. Jack Taylor, a pastor in San Antonio, was a divine disruptor, carrying a mantle of revival, wrote a book called The Hallelujah Factor which unpacks the seven names of God and the Power in that.

In the first century and before, in eastern culture, there was a lot of thought given to a person's name. A name not only identified an individual, but it was also their identity. Oftentimes a person's name would be changed to fit the mission of God on a person's life, or on their personality - Abram became Abraham - Sarai became Sarah. When Jacob was born, his name meant "heel-grabber", because he was born second and he was hanging on to the heel of his twin brother - and it became the pattern of his life to always try and manipulate to get ahead (*Jacob - heel-grabber, supplanter*).

Then, when he met with God at the river Jabbok, Jacob grabbed hold of God and wouldn't let go. After that, his name was changed to *Israel* (champion of God) because of his deeds and actions. In the New Testament, we find Saul - the great disruptor - an enemy of Jesus and the Christian movement. He was blown off his horse on the way to Damascus by a Voice from Heaven, and God changed his name to Paul, and we can see all through the scriptures that names were changed.

What's in a name? - everything's in a name. During this Christmas season, we'll unpack the seven names of Jehovah God (JEHOVAH - Hebrew; Tetragrammaton = YHWH) - other names that marked powerful, game-changing events through the Old Testament. When those events happened, the Hebrew servants of God would *mark* the spot, often with an altar made from a stack of rocks. They would mark a place so that every time they and others would pass by that altar or marker, that pile of rocks would represent what God did at that place.

Now, we have historical markers in many places to mark various events or places of significance. The Jews would actually add the name to Jehovah as a marker:

[1] Jehovah-Nissi: God Is My Banner - Exodus 17:16

We sing the song, *"Victory in Jesus, my Savior forever."* We understand the name *Nissi - Banner - Victory* over us.

[2] Jehovah-Jireh: God Will Provide - Genesis 22:13-14

We sing the song *Jireh* at the Bridge. He is our *Provider* - God Will Provide.

[3] Jehovah-Rapha: God Heals - Exodus 15:26

The God Who Heals - he's still Rapha God today.

[4] Jehovah-Shalom: God Our Peace - Judges 6:24

He is our Peace.

[5] Jehovah-Rohi: God Our Way and Shepherd - Psalm 23:1

Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and also our Shepherd.

[6] Jehovah-Tsidkenu: God of Righteousness - Jeremiah 23:6

He is our Righteousness. In Christ Jesus, his righteousness is transferred into us, and we become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.

[7] Jehovah-Shammah: God Is There/ Ever-Present - Ezekiel 48:35

He is the God who will never leave you or forsake you - the One who sticks closer than a brother - God who has brought you this far will never abandon you, pass you by, or leave you.

We can literally pray these names of God - *"Lord, I thank you that You are Jehovah-Shammah, and You will not abandon me, leave me, or embarrass and humiliate me. You brought me here and You're going to carry me on through."* The names of God are powerful, but there are reasons those names exist.

The Christmas Narrative

Matthew 1:18-23 NIV

"This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly [a scandal]. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel (which means 'God with us')".

This is the story of Joseph - a humble man. Why did God choose Joseph? We don't know. God does not always call the mighty - the popular. Not only did he choose Joseph and Mary, but he chose them from a town of which people said, *"How can anything good come out of Nazareth?"* Here we have the Holy Spirit *before* he was released in his present form upon the earth. He was still a part of the Triune God - the Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit). He was already in existence, even in Genesis 1:1 where he hovered over the waters, and God through his Spirit called everything into creation (also the name *Elohim* which means *the Creative God - the God Who Creates*).

So, the Holy Spirit shows up, and an angel tells Joseph that Mary is a miracle, and the baby within her was not conceived by a human father, but was supernaturally implanted. *What's in a name?* From the very beginning there was a plan, and it was that God would not be content to sit on the sidelines.

John 1:14 NKJV

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Emmanuel - *God with us* - John saying the same thing the angel said. God - Jesus - the Word - became flesh and dwelt among us.

John 1:14 - from The Message Bible says:

"The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, Generous inside and out, true from start to finish." God set up shop on our planet. He came.

Devotion from Pastor Jimmy

Jesus put on an earth-suit and moved into the neighborhood. The word for this is "incarnation" - the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. God with us. God's love was so fierce, so feral, that He could not stand on the sidelines. He had to put on a uniform and get in the game. He could not just watch things happen. He had to enter into our experience. This is what's so beautiful about Jesus - about God - through Christ coming in, and now the Holy Spirit living in us, is that Jesus - God in the flesh - in Jesus - Incarnation - literally experienced everything that humans could experience:

[1] He experienced disappointment

[2] He experienced betrayal

[3] He experienced disillusionment

[4] He experienced pain (he was subject to heat and cold like we are). He entered into our experience - God with us - God among us - and through his Holy Spirit, God in us and upon us.

Jehovah-Nissi - God Is My Banner

Exodus 17:15 MSG

"Moses built an altar and named it 'GOD My Banner.' He said, Salute GOD's rule! GOD at war with Amalek Always and forever!"

A battle was going on in the valley, and on the ridge above, Moses is watching the Israelites battling the Amalekites, and it was not going great. The Amalekites were vicious and they were strong warriors - and the Israelites were set against them in battle and prevailed as long as Moses held up his arms (a powerful symbol of victory), but as his arms grew tired after hours in the air, and he dropped his arms to rest, the Amalekites began to prevail against Israel. Then Aaron and Hur came alongside Moses on either side and held his arms up (powerful symbol of standing alongside someone in prayer - surrounding them as to say, *"We've got you!"*), and as they did, Israel prevailed over Amalek.

They marked that spot, and Moses built an altar (a pile of rocks), and called its name, The Lord is My Banner - Jehovah Nissi - The Lord is My Victory. Because of that beautiful Old Testament picture, we can now pray, *"Lord Jesus - Holy Spirit - Father, I thank You that You are Jehovah Nissi - You are my Banner that flies over me - and that Banner says Victory."*

1 Corinthians 15:57-58 NKJV (an example from the New Testament)

"But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

Why? - because Jesus is our Victory. Jesus is our Banner. God is Jehovah Nissi - our Banner - Jehovah Jireh - he's our Provider. We can pray, *"Lord, it might not look good to me now. My eyes don't see what I need to see in my bank account - in my situation - in whatever's happening in the economy - but here's what I know to be true, Father, the Bible says that You are Jehovah Jireh - You are the God Who will provide. That is Your name - that is Your character - it is Your nature - and I can lean into that and say no matter what's happening, I serve Jehovah Jireh, and He is my Provider."* Arm yourselves. These are weapons in prayer.

Genesis 22:13-14 NKJV

“Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, ‘In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided.’”

Why? - because God had told Abraham to go and sacrifice his son - the son of promise. He, in obedience to the Lord, took the child up the mountain, built an altar, and laid him there, and raised a knife to sacrifice his own son, but an angel prevented him, and Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there was a ram caught in the thicket by its horns, and Abraham took the ram and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son.

Abraham then called the name of the place The Lord Will Provide - Jehovah Jireh. He trusted him when it looked crazy - when no earthly logic could fix it - no earthly wisdom or experience could compare to what he believed God called him to do - to sacrifice his only son - obviously a picture of what God did later with His own Son - the difference being there was no ram, but there was a Lamb, who was Jesus, himself. No ram was in the thicket, but a Lamb was on the cross for us. That's how much God loves us.

Psalms 23:1-2 NKJV

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want [nor lack for any good thing because God is Jehovah Jireh]. He makes me to lie down in green pastures [provision of food and sustenance]; He leads me beside the still waters.”

The still waters are not just so you can have the peace of God that passes all understanding so you can see the beautiful still waters, but it's provision because you need water to live. You have the grass, the field, and the animals to grow the produce - to grow what you need to sustain life, and He is Jehovah Jireh. He is your Provider.

We need to grab hold of this - if God has brought you this far - where we are right now - do we really believe that if he is Jehovah Jireh - our Provider, and Jehovah Nissi - our Victory - our Banner over us - do we believe he would bring us this far and say, *“Well, I'm done with you. You had a good run, but the rest of your life, you're just going to have to scrape and scrimp for everything, and you're on your own - I've removed My Grace.”* No!

We need to learn these words and begin to pray into them, and *use* them as tools for prayer: *"Father thank You that You are Jehovah Jireh. You provide. You won't let me fall. You won't let me starve. I'm going to be obedient. I'm going to walk in obedience - in fellowship - in connection with You, and as I do, You will provide because You love me and You are with me. Father, You are Jehovah Nissi, my Banner of Victory - I will not fail. Even a short-term failure is not final - it's not fatal. It's something I'm going to learn from, and the next time I encounter this, I will prevail, as I mature and grow - and this is a process over time, and so You are my Victory - You are my Banner!"*

2 Peter 1:3-4 NKJV

"...as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

Everything we need to walk this out, he's going to provide. He's not telling you to go out and hunt down the firewood - try to capture and pull together what you need to grow into maturity, and experience the abundant life that Jesus spoke of in John 10:10. God said, *"I am Jehovah Jireh. I will provide as you go, and as you step out, I will provide for you."* The Old Testament informs what we are and who we are in Christ.

Colossians 1:27 NKJV

"To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

What the Son has, the Father gave him. What The Father freely gives him, the Spirit gives us. That is provision. *That* is Victory. Take these words, Jehovah Jireh and Jehovah Nissi, and pray them through the week. Make this a part of your prayer life: *"Father, I thank You that You are Jehovah Jireh - my Provider. I thank You that You are Jehovah Nissi - my Banner - my Victory!"*

Make these something you pray. *"Good morning, Holy Spirit!"* Yes - do it - but now, it's also, *"Thank You for being Jehovah Jireh, my Provider. Thank You for being Jehovah Nissi, my Banner."*

Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus, we thank You that You are our Banner. You are our Victory. Thank You, Jesus, that You are Christ in us, the Hope of Glory. Holy Spirit, help us lean into this. Remind us this week to pray this. Father, thank You for being Jehovah Jireh my Provider. Thank You for being Jehovah Nissi my Banner of Victory. Father, we thank You for Your names. We thank You for how those names were marked with altars, and those places were named because Your name is Your character. Your name is who You are, and it's what You do. Thank You for this Truth that transforms. We receive it today. Holy Spirit, thank You for being our Teacher today. Seal these things in our hearts - deep into the soil of our lives so that the birds can't come and take them away in a moment of doubt, weakness, fear, or stress - that Lord, You will seal these good seeds into good soil and that they'll bring forth a heart of transformation of our own lives. We love You and honor You. In Jesus' name. Amen

Resources

Pastor Jimmy Pruitt's daily devotionals - www.bridgefbg.com

The Hallelujah Factor: An Adventure in the Principles and Practice of Praise -
a great book by Dr. Jack Taylor