



O COME, O COME, EMMANUEL

BY SCOTT CORBIN

One of the distinguishing marks of Adam's relationship with God prior to the Fall is God's imminence, or nearness. The Scriptures portray this intimacy by noting that God spoke directly with Adam (Genesis 2:16) and walked with Adam "in the cool of the day" (Genesis 3:8). God was intimately involved with His creation, and likewise with his son Adam. But when sin entered through Adam's disobedience, that perfect fellowship was ruptured.

What seems to be an insignificant trespass in Genesis 3, only begins to unravel the horrors of evil in the heart of man—first, a cataclysmic nibble of a forbidden fruit, and then bloodshed amongst brothers, all in the span of one chapter—and as man's wickedness increases, so God's fellowship amongst him begins to wane. While God walked with Adam in the cool of the day, Moses is only able to see his backside lest he die. While God spoke directly and presently with Adam, it's only through the prophets in later Biblical literature that Israel hears Yahweh's voice.

As the history of Israel continues to develop and their idolatrous sin only grows more and more profane, it seems that God's presence is totally withdrawn. However, in the midst of the chaos of their sin, there is a prophetic whisper in the book of Isaiah that points to a day when God will be near once again. "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14) "Immanuel" literally means, "God is with us". There is coming a day when God will once again be near!

"O Come, O Come Immanuel" captures the longing anticipation of exilic Israel for the day when God will draw near to His people once again. However, what Israel did not know was not only that God would draw near, but would also clothe himself in flesh and dwell amongst men. What Israel did not know was that Immanuel was coming to be born of a woman, live the perfect, obedient life that his people could not live, and die a horrific death, crushed under the weight of God's wrath. Immanuel was going to draw his people near by suffering in their stead.

Therefore, the end of each verse perfectly captures the response of those who have seen Immanuel—rejoicing. What's more is that as Christians we no longer have to wonder if God will ever again draw near: God has drawn near in the person of His son Jesus, the second Adam. And because of Jesus, the church now responds not out of a longing for Immanuel to come, but jubilant rejoicing. Immanuel—God with us—has come in the person of Jesus. Rejoice!

“For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.” Romans 5:10-11