



TEACHING

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The EVANGEL Voice

December, 2008

God With Us

It's that time of year again. Thanksgiving has come and gone and now December has arrived. Our thoughts turn to Christmas. Where has the time gone? It seems like only yesterday we were gathered with family and friends around the tree opening gifts and celebrating the birth of Jesus. What a year this has been. In an historic election, Sen. Barak Obama was elected the 44th President of the United States. We've seen an economic crisis unlike anything in the recent past. The stock market wildly gyrates between gains and losses so quickly that we're unable to keep up with it. People are losing their jobs and many families face the prospect of starting the New Year with losing their home to foreclosure. In the past few days we've witnessed the horrible terrorist attack in India that left almost 200 people dead and many more injured. The result of all this is that during a time when we should be full of joy and excitement our thoughts are overwhelmed by uncertainty and anxiety.

In Israel, at the time of the birth of Jesus, Jewish families also faced a time of great uncertainty. They wondered how much more intrusive the Roman government would become. They questioned their ability to pay their taxes. They were concerned about the kind of life their children would have. To top it off, the Roman emperor, Caesar Augustus ordered a census and now families had to figure out not only how to get to their ancestral home but also how to pay for the journey. The question kept running through their minds. "Where is the promised Messiah the prophets talked about?"

In the midst of all this, there was a young man who was anticipating his wedding day. He had a small carpentry business and knew that he would be able to provide for his new bride. Despite the troubled times, his mind was filled with joyous thoughts about the future. But then disaster struck. Joseph discovered the woman he loved and was about to marry was pregnant. Her explanation was simply preposterous. An angel had appeared to her and told her she would give birth to a child that was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Did Mary really believe that crazy story? What was he going to do?

I can only imagine that Joseph spent many sleepless nights contemplating the situation in which he found himself. He felt betrayed, humiliated, and angry. His plans for the

future were crumbling. Still, he loved Mary and didn't want to expose her to public scandal and ridicule. After one of those sleepless nights, Joseph decided to privately break off his relationship with Mary. He would extricate himself from this mess as quickly and quietly as possible and get on with his life. Having figured out a plan, he drifted off to sleep for the first time in days.

Sometime during the night he had an incredible dream. An angel appeared to him. His message was one of hope. He told Joseph to not be afraid to marry his future bride. He confirmed Mary's story about the baby. The angel told Joseph that the baby would be a boy and he was to give him the name, Jesus, because he was going to save his people from their sins (Matt. 1:20, 21). Matthew further records (1:22, 23) that all this was to take place to fulfill what Isaiah had prophesied (Isaiah 7:14).

We know the rest of the story. Joseph took Mary to be his wife and they traveled to Joseph's ancestral home of Bethlehem. In a stable, Mary gave birth to Jesus and placed him in a manger. The angels appeared to the shepherds and announced the birth of the promised Messiah. The Magi saw a star in the east and journeyed to find the new king. King Herod, fearing he would be deposed by this new king had newborn babies slaughtered.

Jesus grew into a man and at the age of 30 began a three year, public ministry. He taught with authority unseen by human eyes. The sick were miraculously healed. Dead people were raised to life. Those oppressed by demonic spirits were set free. The religious crowd, unhappy with this rising movement, conspired to have Jesus killed. Finally, they accomplished their goal and Jesus was crucified and buried in a borrowed grave. However, despite their plans, Jesus was gloriously resurrected. He ascended to heaven and now sits at the right hand of God the Father and will someday return to take us home to be with Him forever.

As we reflect on these events we are drawn to a small three word phrase that encapsulates the meaning and essence of Christmas. Matthew (1:23), quoting from Isaiah, tells us that the special baby would be given the name Immanuel, which means "God with us." God with us! What an incredible statement! Jesus, God Himself, the creator of the universe took on human form and lived among us. He didn't just show up for some kind of cosmic field trip to investigate what it was like to be a human. Rather He came to bring us a new way of life that would be freed from the eternal consequences of our sin. That freedom would be purchased with His blood that was shed on the cross.

Because God is with us, some significant things have happened.

1. We aren't condemned. "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." (John 3:17)
2. Our sins are forgiven. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)
3. Our lives exceed expectations. "The thief [Satan] comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10)

4. We can boldly approach God. “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” (Heb. 4:14-16).
5. We don’t have to live in fear. “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)
6. We can live with peace. “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (John 14:27)
7. We aren’t alone. “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matt. 28:20)
8. Death is no longer something to be feared. “‘Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?’ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (I Cor. 15:55-57)
9. We have an eternal inheritance. “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.” (I Thes. 4:16-18)

This Christmas season, let’s pause from all the activity and take some time to meditate on that little phrase, God with us. Let’s allow the Holy Spirit to take it and plant it deep in our hearts. Let’s allow Him to lift our eyes from the uncertainty and anxiety we face and transform us into heralds of this good news. Like the shepherds, let’s tell others what happened on that first Christmas morning. Then let’s join together in magnificent praise and worship of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords who was and is and is to come. The one who was dead and is now alive for ever and ever!

On behalf of the Evangel staff and student body, I want to wish you and your families a most joyous and blessed Christmas season. It’s my prayer that you would experience God with us in a more intimate way than ever before. I’m also praying that the New Year will bring you peace, joy, and prosperity.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

2009 Spring Semester

The 2009 Spring Semester schedule is now available. We are offering six courses including a new one, C-525 The Winds of Revival. Listed below is the complete schedule. For further information visit our website www.ets.edu or call the Evangel office at 433-7760 or toll-free at (888) 711-0066. Hope to see you in class!

N-325 The Life and Theology of Paul

A detailed study of the life and ministry of the Apostle and an examination of Pauline theology and thought as seen in his Epistles. (3 hrs.)

- * **Professor:** Dr. Robert H. Reichard
- * **Dates:** Mondays: Jan. 12 through Feb. 23
- * **Time:** 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

O-302 Old Testament Hebrew II

Prerequisite O-301. (3 hrs.)

- * **Professor:** Victoria Rocco, D.Min.
- * **Dates:** Thursdays: Jan. 22 through April 16
- * **Time:** 7:00 to 10:00 p.m.

C-525 The Winds of Revival

This course will examine great revival movements to determine their impact on the Church, the culture, and their relevance to the contemporary Church. (3 hrs.)

- * **Professor:** Dr. Robert H. Reichard & Bob Reichard, III
- * **Dates:** Tuesdays, Feb. 10, 24; March 10, 24; April 14, 28
- * **Time:** 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

N-101 New Testament Introduction

A systematic study of the background against which the New Testament was written and a brief glimpse of the individual books as to authorship, date, purpose, characteristics, etc. (3 hrs.)

- * **Professor:** Dr. Robert H. Reichard
- * **Dates:** Mondays: March 9 through April 27
- * **Time:** 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

O-401 Old Testament Hebrew Readings

Readings from selected Old Testament passages with emphasis on translation and syntax. The purpose of the course is to develop translation skills and increase the student's familiarity and ease in handling the text. Prerequisites O-301 & O-302. (3 hrs.)

- * **Professor:** Victoria Rocc, D.Min.
- * **Dates:** Thursdays: April 23 through June 4
- * **Times:** 7:00 p.m. through 10:00 p.m.

O-431 The Psalms

An introduction to the nature of Hebrew poetry with emphasis on the different types of Psalms and their significance. (3 hrs.)

- * **Professor:** Bob Reichard, III
- * **Dates:** Weekends: May 1, 2 & June 5, 6
- * **Time:** Friday; 7:00 p.m. through 10:00 p.m.
Saturday; 9:00 a.m. through noon
1:00 p.m. through 4:00 p.m.

Directed Study Courses

- * N-325DS The Life & Theology of Paul
- * C-525DS The Winds of Revival
- * O-431 The Psalms

School of Practical Ministry

The School of Practical Ministry is designed with a threefold purpose. First, students will be challenged to **encounter** God in a deeper, more intimate way. Second, students are encouraged to **explore** and discover more about themselves and their calling. Third, upon completion of the program students will be **equipped** to do the work of ministry within their local church setting. For further information and the complete schedule refer to the website www.esopm.org

New Group begins Thursday, January 22, 2009.

Thank You

I want to take this opportunity to personally thank each of you who have supported the work of Evangel with faithful prayer and financial gifts. You are an integral part of the Evangel team. Your prayers help students persevere through those difficult times that come in a semester when they are torn between family responsibilities, ministry opportunities, career obligations, and that research paper that is due in one week. Your prayers are also a source of strength and blessing for the staff. Even, we go through those kinds of days that don't seem to have any easy resolution. It's in those difficult times that we sense the presence of the Lord and know that you are praying for us.

Your financial gifts also are a great blessing. They help us continue to teach, minister, and serve against what seems to be overwhelming odds. We never take for granted your generosity and continually pray for God to give you an overwhelming harvest for the seed you have sown into this work. In addition, so many of you send thoughtful notes with your gift that almost always seem to come at just the right time and say just the right thing.

As I reflect on everything that you do for us, a "thank you" doesn't seem to communicate enough. Without your efforts, Evangel doesn't exist. It's that simple. Each time you pray, each time you give, men and women are given the opportunity to live out their God given dream of changing their piece of the world. In a unique classroom set-

ting each student receives not only instruction but Spirit anointed ministry as well. Over the years we've seen God do some amazing things in the lives of our students. He's healed those who were sick. He's provided financially for those who were in need. He's multiplied time to help students complete their assigned work. He's provided new jobs for those who needed one. He's proven Himself faithful to each one. That's what your prayers and gifts do. Thank you!

As the end of the year approaches and a new one arrives, we face some great challenges. We desperately need greater financial resources. 2008 has been a difficult year and we have fallen behind on one large bill. We have made a commitment to have that bill paid by the end of the year. In November, God provided additional resources so we were able to pay half of that bill. However, to be honest, I don't know where the rest of that money is going to come from. There are also some significant things we believe the Lord is calling us to do in 2009 that right now are not budgeted for. We want to begin to digitally record class lectures so that we can make them available on CD's or online as a podcast. We have an opportunity to develop a pilot program for the School of Practical Ministry that would provide training for pastors and ministers in developing nations. We want to transform our Directed Study program into an online experience that would open up Evangel to students across the country or around the world.

All we need to get these things going is money. Paul tells us in Eph. 3:20 that we serve a God who is able to do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine. Won't you join with me in praying that God would abundantly provide financial resources to accomplish what He's calling us to do? Would you pray for us to have wisdom to know how to implement these new things? Finally, would you consider making a special end of the year gift to help us pay off this remaining bill and start the New Year fresh? We sure could use your help. You can use the enclosed envelope and remember that every gift to Evangel is tax deductible.

On behalf of the Evangel family, thank you for your faithful support throughout the years and for your continued support in the years to come. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Grace & peace,

Bob Reichard, III
President